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THE GREAT COURSES®

Fine Arts & Music



A History of European Art

Taught by: Professor William Kloss, Independent Art Historian,
 The Smithsonian Associates, Smithsonian Institution

Part 4

Course Guidebook

 THE TEACHING COMPANY®

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Professor Kloss is an independent art historian and scholar who lectures and writes about a wide range of European and American art. He was educated at Oberlin College, where he earned a B.A. in English and an M.A. in Art History.

Professor Kloss continued his postgraduate work at the University of Michigan, where he held a teaching fellowship. He was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship for two years of study in Rome and was an assistant professor of art history at the University of Virginia, where he taught 17th - and 18th -century European art and 19th -century French art. His courses were very highly rated by both undergraduate and graduate students.

A resident of Washington, DC, Professor Kloss has enjoyed a long association with the Smithsonian Institution as an independent lecturer for the seminar and travel program, presenting more than 100 courses in the United States and abroad on subjects ranging from ancient Greek art to Impressionism. He has also been a featured lecturer for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and for The Art Institute of Chicago. He is a guest faculty lecturer for the American Arts Course, Sotheby's Institute.

Professor Kloss serves on the Committee for the Preservation of the White House, a presidential appointment he has held since 1990. He is the author of several books, including *Art in the White House: A Nation's Pride*, and most recently, co-author of *United States Senate Catalogue of Fine Art*. He has also written articles published in *Winterthur Portfolio*, *Antiques*, *American Art Quarterly*, and *Antiques & Fine Art* and is the lecturer for The Teaching Company's course *Great Artists of the Italian Renaissance*.

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A History of European Art

Scope:

In this course, we'll survey the great monuments of European painting, sculpture, and architecture from the age of Charlemagne to the onset of World War II. We'll spend time together examining major works by the greatest visual artists of a millennium of Western civilization, including extensive considerations of such important artists as Giotto, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, and Monet. We'll place these artists and their masterpieces in the political, religious, and social context of their time, so that we have a more profound understanding of both why an artwork was created and how it responded to a particular set of historical circumstances. In the course of this survey, we'll witness the birth and fruition of a brilliant European civilization, emerging from the shadow of the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages to become one of the most dominant cultural forces in history.

In Lecture One, we'll set the stage for our survey by providing a chronological overview of the course. I'll also introduce the five essential aspects in the analysis of works of art: subject, interpretation, style, context, and emotion. An appreciation of each of these individual elements is crucial to our understanding of artists and their works. In the first lecture, we'll illustrate this approach by analyzing several representative masterpieces. Throughout the course, we'll employ these key elements to look at paintings, sculpture, and prints. We'll also identify and define the five areas of subject matter that constitute the major categories of art: narrative or historical art, portraiture, landscape, still life, and scenes of daily life. During the survey, we will see how each era emphasized certain subjects in art to communicate important societal and political ideas and values. Throughout the survey, one of our goals will be to learn to take time with art—to look at it, consider it, and feel it without haste—in the hopes that an understanding of art can change and enhance our lives.

In Lectures Two through Ten we'll explore the artistic output of the Middle Ages, from the early architectural monuments of the Carolingian Empire to the massive cathedrals and exquisite sculpture of the French Gothic style. Despite its former reputation, this was a period of great creativity and provides a necessary background to our extensive consideration of the achievements of the Renaissance that followed. We will spend a significant amount of time, Lectures Eleven through Twenty-Seven, examining the early development and the blossoming of the Renaissance in both Italy and the north. The Renaissance was both a rebirth of interest in Classical literature and art and a revival of interest in learning that, together, led to a reevaluation of man's place in the world. We will discuss the place of Humanism and Neo-Platonic philosophy in the Renaissance—both of which were reflected in different styles in art of the period. We will note how the conceptual advances of the time, beginning with Giotto's approach to the illusionistic creation of space, led to a revolution in the

expressive possibilities of narrative art. We'll trace this accomplishment through the works of some of the greatest artists in history, from Masaccio and Donatello, at the outset of the 15th century, to the acknowledged geniuses of the High Renaissance, including Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Bellini, and Titian. We'll also discuss the tremendous innovations in Renaissance architecture, from Brunelleschi's dome for the cathedral in Florence to the creation of the new Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome in the High Renaissance. We will also address the Renaissance in the north, with considerations of the art of Jan van Eyck, Dürer, Bosch, and Bruegel, among many other important masters.

In Lectures Twenty-Eight through Thirty-Eight, we'll commence with a discussion of the evolution of Baroque style in the art of Caravaggio and the Bolognese Carracci family. We'll spend a substantial amount of time examining the presiding genius of the time in Rome, the sculptor and architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini. We'll continue from Italy to a broader view of European Baroque art, from Velázquez in Spain to Rubens and Rembrandt in the Netherlands, to Versailles and the court of Louis XIV in France. Not only will we discuss the major masters of the era, but we'll spend time on many of the extraordinary yet lesser known geniuses of the period. I'll then discuss the 18th-century reactions to the Baroque by introducing the Rococo style of Watteau, Boucher, and Fragonard. It is at this time that we will see the nations of Europe becoming increasingly politically and culturally unified, sharing an artistic language expressed in the varying accents of Italy, Spain, Holland, Belgium, and France.

Finally, in Lectures Thirty-Nine through Forty-Eight, we'll examine the beginnings of modern European art with the Neoclassical movement of the late 18th century. We'll discuss the work of David that defined the Neoclassical style, and we will detail the work of the great Romantic artists Goya, Géricault, and Delacroix. We'll see how the Neoclassical and Romantic art of the early 19th century gave way to the Realism of Courbet and Manet, which in turn, led to the Impressionist achievements of Degas and Monet. We'll have the opportunity to discuss the reactions to Impressionism embodied in the work of Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Seurat and reserve time to discuss the seminal contributions of Cezanne and Rodin to the art of the 20th century. As we move into the new century, we again see a period of internationalism in art, as well as a greater variety of artistic styles and movements, all of which responded to, were conditioned by, or were created by the events leading up to World War I. We'll conclude with a consideration of the early movements of the century, including Fauvism, Cubism, German Expressionism, Dada, and Surrealism, and the pivotal role of the two towering geniuses of early modern art, Picasso and Matisse.

Lecture Thirty-Seven

Louis XIV and Versailles

Scope: In this lecture, we look at the architecture and gardens of the Palace of Versailles and discuss how the palace reflected Louis XIV's notion of himself as the Sun King, the center of the universe and the source of absolute, divine power, and simultaneously impressed the rest of Europe. Louis died after reigning for nearly 75 years, and the mood in France shifted. We will look at the work of Watteau to illustrate the pervading sense of nostalgia seen for a brief time in the transition from the Baroque to the Rococo.

Outline

- I. We begin this lecture with some background on the political situation in France leading up to the construction of the great palace of Versailles.
 - A. Paris had been the seat of the French government since the 10th century. After the death of Louis XIII in 1643, his widow, Anne of Austria, became regent for her 4-year-old son, Louis XIV.
 - B. In May 1648, in response to widespread anti-taxation riots, the parliament in Paris revolted and passed a law limiting the royal prerogatives. This parliament was known as the *Fronde Parlement* (*fronde* meaning "revolt"). The queen and her son fled Paris. The indignity of the restrictive law and the forced flight had a powerful influence on Louis' subsequent actions as king.
 - C. In 1651, when he was 13, Louis ascended the throne, concluding his mother's regency. Ten years later, not long after his marriage to a daughter of Philip IV of Spain, Louis' personal reign began in earnest.
 1. Louis XIII, who detested society, had built a small hunting lodge near the village of Versailles, 11 miles from Paris. He expanded the lodge into a more substantial chateau, completed by 1636.
 2. At least by the mid-1660s, Louis XIV had determined to move the seat of government from Paris to Versailles, to escape the inherent danger of urban mobs, but the court could not move until 1682.
 3. Most of the important nobles of France were compelled to move to Versailles by the king. In their palatial imprisonment, their estates were left unattended and their power base was out of reach.
 - D. Louis' Superintendent of Finance—his tax collector—was Nicolas Fouquet, who in 1657, began to construct a grand and beautiful chateau, Vaux le Vicomte, designed by the architect Louis Le Vau, here seen from across the formal garden (1657–1661).
 1. The gardens were laid out by André Le Nôtre; the decoration inside was done by Charles Lebrun.

2. When the chateau was completed in 1661, Fouquet, proudly and unwisely, invited the king and his entourage to a grand housewarming. The party impressed the king greatly—too greatly.
3. Curious about the financing of such a structure, Louis investigated. Finding evidence that Fouquet had misappropriated tax monies, Louis ordered the arrest and exile of Fouquet.
4. He also reassigned the team that had produced the chateau to Versailles, and in 1661, construction of the new palace was begun.
5. We see a bust depicting *Louis XIV* (1665), sculptured by Bernini. Louis is depicted as a powerful monarch. The king had invited Bernini to France to complete the design of the Louvre Palace in Paris. His Italian architectural style, in particular the flat roof so unsuited to the northern climate, was in striking contrast to the pavilion style and peaked roofs of French architecture.
6. The idealized features of the bust were intended to emphasize Louis's grandeur and superiority.

II. We now turn to the layout and exterior views of Versailles.

- A. Our first example is an engraving of the layout of Versailles created by François Blondel in the 17th century. The orientation is completely axial, leading from the main approach road, through the Court of Honor, through the entrance and the king's bedroom (directly behind the Hall of Mirrors), and on into the garden to the *Fountain of Latona*, the *Fountain of Apollo*, through a canal to the very end of the park.
- B. Our next example shows a perspective view of the garden and chateau of Versailles in a painting by Pierre Patel (1605–1676).
 1. The emphasis, again, is on the unyielding center axis; the viewer gets the sense of looking at an entire world.
 2. The king's bedroom, as mentioned, was on the center of the axis, since the Sun was believed to be the center of the universe.
 3. Rooms were lined up, one after another, in each of the wings, and all the doors were aligned. This arrangement is called *enfilade* and, in the winter, resulted in cold winds blowing through the corridors.
- C. We see a modern aerial view of the central section of the garden façade, designed by Le Vau, who adopted Bernini's suggestion that the sloping roofs be hidden behind the cornice. The palace was finished by Jules Hardouin Mansart, who also enlarged it by extending the wings.
 1. Note the long horizontal line broken by the projecting central section, which contains the Throne Room (the Hall of Mirrors), the Salon of War, and the Salon of Peace.
 2. The proportions dictated by the Classical order are stretched to the limit by the length of this enormous façade. The traditional French pavilion composition—tall pavilions alternating with segments of wall—had been abandoned.

- D. The *Fountain of Latona* is not far from the garden façade.
 1. A myth from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* relates that Latona, mother of Apollo and Diana, became thirsty while wandering with her children to avoid Juno's wrath and stopped at a lake in Lycia to drink. She was prevented from drinking by peasants who were collecting reeds there. Angered, she turned them into frogs.
 2. This unpleasant story was not casually chosen simply because it involved a lake and was suitable for a fountain sculpture. The subject, with Louis as Apollo and his mother, Anne, as Latona, was dictated by the king as a reminder of the ultimate failure of the Fronde. The nobles who were now in enforced residence at Versailles could contemplate this mythological warning every day.
- E. Finally on the exterior, we see also the *Apollo Fountain*, by François Girardon (1628–1715), situated on the central axis of the park as seen from the palace. Apollo (the sun god) in his chariot, accompanied by tritons, is rising from the water.

III. Our next examples are from the interior of the palace.

- A. Approaching the king, as every foreign ambassador must, was a considerable effort, involving a long march through the aligned doors of innumerable rooms toward the Throne Room. Before arrival at the Hall of Mirrors, ambassadors would find themselves in the Salon of War.
 1. Here they would see a relief of *Louis XIV on Horseback* by Antoine Coysevox (1640–1720). This relief depicts Louis XIV as himself, not in the guise of Alexander the Great, for example.
 2. We see another view of the relief looking toward the doorway to the Throne Room and the Hall of Mirrors.
- B. The Hall of Mirrors was begun in 1678; it was designed by J. H. Mansart and decorated by Charles Lebrun.
 1. Foreign delegations to the king were recorded in paintings, such as *Reparations Made by the Doge of Genoa to Louis XIV in 1685* (by Claude-Guy Halle, c. 1710), which suggests the abasement to which they were subjected.
 2. Looking up they would have seen *Louis XIV Governing Alone* by Charles Lebrun (1619–1690), a ceiling painting above the throne. This subject commemorates the coming-of-age of Louis and the defeat of those who would have limited royal power. Like the relief of Louis trampling his enemies beneath his horse's hooves, this painting shows Louis as Louis, not represented by a symbol.
- C. One must understand Versailles—the palace and the rigid court etiquette—as a willed achievement by the king, one that came at great personal cost. In pursuit of absolute control, Louis enforced equally strict discipline upon himself. His private life was under the constant scrutiny of the “privileged” courtiers who were chosen to share it.

- D. Louis himself tired of all this attention and built two pavilions in the park as retreats from the crowd in the main palace, but he was followed even there. When he died in 1715, he had been king for nearly 75 years.
- E. Louis' grandson succeeded him as Louis XV. Because the new king was only 5 years old, the nation was under the guidance of a regent, the boy's uncle, Philip of Orleans. The regency continued until the majority of Louis XV in 1723. This brief period was marked by an aura—at least in hindsight—of melancholy and uncertainty.
- IV. Antoine Watteau (1684–1721) briefly emerged to record the twilight mood of the time, the nostalgia, the shift from absolute power to a time of less strictness and greater indulgence in hedonism.
- A. Watteau was born in Valenciennes, a Flemish town that had recently become French. The main influence on his style was Rubens, but modulated into the pictorial language of the 18th century.
- B. Our first example from Watteau shows *Pierrot (Gilles)* (c. 1718–1719). The commedia dell'arte had been imported into France from Italy in the 16th century and was immensely popular. The figure of Gilles seems vulnerable and inert in this painting; the other actors in the troop are below and behind him. He seems isolated and rather sad; the emotional pull of this painting is quite strong.
- C. Our next example is *Embarkation to the Island of Cythera* (1717).
1. The title is almost certainly incorrect; this is a departure, not an arrival. The figures rise slowly, as though unwilling to leave. They form a serpentine line down to the remarkable pageant-like boat.
 2. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that Cythera is a non-place, and the painting is both allegorical and poetic. It can support both interpretations. Still, pleasure seems not to be anticipated here, but spent, as the "actors" reluctantly rise and leave.
 3. The mood of the painting is new, when it is compared to Rubens's *Garden of Love* (c. 1632–1634). The full-bodied, full-blooded confidence of the Baroque in Rubens's painting is left behind; a new style was being born that would become known as the *Rococo*.
 4. This is the Baroque with the wind taken out of its sails; saturated colors give way to pastels, and large forms and pronounced curves become small forms and gentle curves. The Rococo is a *diminuendo* of the Baroque.
- D. Next we see Watteau's *The Shopsign* (or *Gersaint's Shopsign*) (1721).
1. Gersaint's gallery in the painting is lined with pictures that are inspired by Venetian paintings of the 16th century and Flemish paintings of the 17th century, but they are not copies. These paintings represent the schools most admired by Watteau.
 2. On the right, a shopgirl shows a mirror to two men and a woman, who admire themselves in it. Next to them, an elderly pair admires

a large, oval mythological painting; the woman, who is standing, looks at the landscape, while the man, who is kneeling, looks just as intently at the nudes. Just left of center, a man offers his hand to a woman entering the shop.

3. This woman glances down to her left, where a shop assistant is lowering a portrait of Louis XIV into a packing case, as we see in a detail of the painting. Gersaint had named his shop *Au Grand Monarche*—"at the Grand Monarch's"—in homage to the late king, but it is also a farewell to the entire epoch that had finally closed with Louis' death. Once more, and for the last time, nostalgia infuses Watteau's work.

- E. On the 18th of July 1721, Watteau died of the tuberculosis from which he had suffered for more than 15 years; he was not yet 37 years old. The 18th century in French painting had begun—brilliantly but sadly.

Works Discussed:

Chateau de Versailles, 1661–1710, Versailles, France.

Louis Le Vau:

Chateau of Vaux-le-Vicomte, 1657–61, Maincy, France.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini:

Louis XIV, 1665, marble, 31 ½" H (80 cm H), Musée National de Versailles, Versailles, France.

Jean-Antoine Watteau:

Pierrot (Gilles), c. 1718–19, oil on canvas, 6' ½" x 4' 10 ½" (184 x 149 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

The Embarkation to the Island of Cythera, 1717, oil on canvas, 4' 2 ¾" x 6' 4 ½" (129 x 194 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

The Shopsign (Gersaint's Shopsign), 1721, oil on canvas, 5' 5" x 10' (163 x 306 cm), Charlottenburg, Berlin, Germany.

Further Reading:

Frederika Vivier, *Versailles: Its History, Its Splendor and Its Gardens*.

Helmut Borsch-Supan, *Antoine Watteau, 1684–1721*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does the architecture of Versailles reinforce the political idea of the king as absolute monarch?
2. Compare and contrast the Baroque style of Rubens with the Rococo of Watteau.

Lecture Thirty-Eight

French Art in the 18th Century

Scope: In this lecture, we look at variations to be found within the Rococo style, from the serious still lifes and genre pictures of Chardin to the frivolity of Boucher and Fragonard. We also touch briefly on Rococo architecture and the style as seen outside of France.

Outline

- I. As we saw at the end of the last lecture, Antoine Watteau offered a melancholy prologue to the art of 18th-century France, one that reflected the profound sense of uncertainty that followed the death of the Sun King.
 - A. After Watteau, French art developed in various ways, its styles reflecting both the much-changed atmosphere of the court of Louis XV and the increasing importance of the middle class.
 - B. Although 18th-century French art is most often designated Rococo, a style that certainly springs in part from Watteau, many historians prefer not to apply the term to Watteau himself. His characteristic nostalgia seems too far removed from the thoughtless sensuality of François Boucher, for example, to be defined by the same term.
 - C. Another painter whose art is even less well served by the Rococo label is Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699–1779).
 1. A superb painter of still life and genre pictures, Chardin has always been esteemed by connoisseurs, collectors, and artists. We see first his *Soap Bubbles* (1733–1734), one of several paintings on the same subject.
 2. A boy, nearly a young man, is shown blowing a large soap bubble through a straw while leaning on a stone windowsill. Behind the young man, a small child peers over the sill, rapt in the moment before the bubble bursts.
 3. This subject was not new, and its meaning was well known. The transitory nature of the soap bubble had long been regarded as a metaphor for the brevity of youth and the brevity of life itself. The bubble-blower already seems to be mature, and his demeanor is serious and concentrated; his pose is stable and tightly constructed.
 4. The painting is created with a high degree of illusionism. The windowsill and the vine that partially frames it press against the front of the picture plane and almost into the viewer's space. Indeed, the bubble seems to hover in front of our eyes, so that we, like the small child, hold still in expectation. The physical immediacy of the image commands our attention, and its seriousness prompts our contemplation.

5. The palette is restrained, dominated by browns, greys, and pale greens, setting off the warm flesh tones of the boy's head and hands, with just a touch of rose pink in his skin and on his coat.
 6. Chardin's world is an arrested one, where both people and objects take on the nature of still life.
- D. In his genre pictures, Chardin returned to themes introduced by 17th-century Dutch and Flemish painters. One example is *The Kitchen Maid* (*Woman Scraping Vegetables*) (1738).
 1. This picture's many virtues require a patient eye and receptive mind to digest. It seems so simple: Stooping slightly, a tired kitchen maid has paused in her work of paring vegetables. A turnip dangles from one hand; the already scraped turnips are in the bowl of water at her feet, next to which a pan leans against a butcher block with a cleaver driven into it. More vegetables are in the lower left corner. The colors are warm and rich.
 2. But look at the forms, shapes, volumes, and weight of all these components. One feels the weight of the cleaver, almost sensing the strength of the arm that wielded it. All the objects on the right side coalesce around the large wooden block. The vegetables are all large and solid and tactile. Most of all, the substantial block of the woman, with the thickly layered paint of her apron, conveys permanence, fixedness.
 3. In the much-changed society of the Enlightenment, these paintings seem almost ironic. Wealthy collectors admired them for their decorum, as well as for their purely artistic qualities. This fact is striking when one realizes that they were painted only a short time before the Swiss-French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau published his "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" (1754), condemning "moral or political inequality."
 4. It is true that Chardin is not intentionally a social critic. In this painting, he has simply created a timeless image of a servant who has paused in her repetitive task, a task imposed by someone "in a position to exact obedience." That is criticism enough.
 - E. It is Chardin's still life paintings that command the highest critical respect, as we see here with *Jar of Olives* (1760). Denis Diderot, the famous editor of the Enlightenment's *Encyclopedia*, wrote of this painting that its "magic defies understanding."
 - F. We see another Chardin still life, *Glass of Water and Coffee Pot* (c. 1761).
 1. Compared with the *Jar of Olives*, this still life is rigorously edited, reduced to a few perfectly selected and contrasted objects. The silvery glass of water is balanced with the brown coffee pot, and the two are joined by the white and green garlic heads, whose leaves and stems overhang the table's edge at the right.

2. None of these objects can be moved without irreparably damaging the composition, whose unity is finalized by the light that grazes the handle and rim of the pot and glows on the glass and garlic. Our point of view is close and immediate; the intimacy is palpable; the harmony of each piece to the whole is simply perfect.

II. *Rococo* derives from *rocaille*, a word referring to decorative rock work, as in ornamental grottoes in parks and gardens. We turn now to the most famous exponent of the high Rococo in painting, François Boucher (1703–1770), for the embodiment of the style.

- A. *The Setting of the Sun* (1753) is the epitome of the Rococo style and the epitome of Boucher's art at its finest. This is one of a pair of paintings commissioned for Mme. de Pompadour, mistress of Louis XV. The other was *The Rising of the Sun*. The paintings are more than 10 ½ feet high and are Boucher's most ambitious works, which he reportedly considered his masterpieces.
- B. Pompadour was Boucher's great patron, and her love of mythological reveries perfectly suited Boucher, for whom reality seems to have held little appeal. In *The Setting of the Sun*, it is possible to see the central nymph as Pompadour herself and Apollo as a symbol of Louis XV.
- C. The glowing pastel hues, the asymmetrical composition governed by a long diagonal, and the arabesque design of water and air, light and dark, are all typical of this high Rococo moment, more clearly seen in painting by Boucher than anyone else.

III. Architecture was strongly affected by the new style of the 18th century, especially in the design and decoration of interior spaces. Many buildings of the period give no hint on their exteriors of the surprises within.

- A. We see, for example, the Salon de la Princesse (1737–1740) by Germain Boffrand (1667–1754). This apartment was on the second floor of a two-story oval pavilion that Boffrand designed as an addition to the earlier hôtel.
- B. The oval ground plan of the salon was only the beginning of this charming, fanciful structure. The curved frames of the allegorical paintings between the windows and doors provide a continuously undulating cornice or, rather, no traditional cornice at all, because it does not demarcate walls from ceiling but allows them to flow together.
- C. The windows push toward the ceiling; the structure is masked by the decoration. The salon is capped by an airy dome looking more like a garden pergola that finally contains the flowing interior.

IV. Turning back to painting, we see works by Jean-Baptiste Greuze and Jean-Honoré Fragonard.

- A. We see first *The Village Bride* (1760–1761) by Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805).

1. This is a narrative painting that represents a father giving his daughter and her dowry to a suitor, the serious young man who has just received the bag of coins. The father is praising his daughter's virtues, while a notary in the right foreground records the legal aspects of the occasion.
2. The tearful mother at the left balances her husband; the younger daughter is sad to lose her sister, while the elder daughter at right is sullen and jealous.
3. Greuze presents this family drama in a shallow stage space, arranging his figures in a frieze across the canvas. He concentrates on the emotions of the players, and to modern eyes, they frequently overact. But Greuze's contemporaries adored his paintings and their social and moral lessons of family virtues.

B. Our next artist is Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806), whose *Denis Diderot* (c. 1765) we see here. Diderot is holding the pages of what was undoubtedly a volume of his *Encyclopedia* and has had his attention momentarily distracted. The portrait is freely painted and fluent; the paint looks wet.

C. Fragonard also painted *The Swing* (1766), depicting an elegantly dressed woman on a swing!

1. Note the spotlight effect—on her, on the cupid statue, and on the young man in the bushes below. At right, an older man in the shadows pulls the rope to propel the swing.
2. The woman kicks off one slipper as a souvenir for her lover, while the cupid signals for discreet silence.
3. The dreamy, unreal design surrounds the swinging lady with lush vegetation, while the spotlight catches her at center stage. It all seems like playacting; there is no hint of reality.

D. *The Meeting*, from the *Progress of Love* (1771–1773), was commissioned by Mme. du Barry, who had succeeded Pompadour as Louis' mistress. Together with three other panels, it was intended as a decoration in a new dining pavilion in the garden of her chateau at Louveciennes.

1. Like *The Swing*, this painting shows adults playing at love and has the passing charm that accompanies the refusal to grow up. The scene is a little ambiguous.
2. In a detail of the lovers, we see that the girl seems to have heard something but has mistaken the direction of the noise. While she looks toward her right, with her left arm extended in alarm, a young man is coming over the low wall. He seems to stop in mute admiration of the girl.
3. Venus, with Cupid, in the form of a statue, looks down to observe the scene. A large fan-like tree rises behind the statue, its soft, billowing shape as unreal as the rest of this amorous pursuit.

4. In the end, Mme. du Barry rejected Fragonard's paintings and replaced them with a suite of works by another artist who was working in the emerging Neoclassical style. Fragonard found himself caught short by a radical shift in taste, one that would soon drive out the Rococo and replace frivolity with a severe morality. The forward rush of the 18th century toward its revolutionary end was gathering momentum.

- E. We associate the Rococo style with France, and the term is best applied there. But the stylistic features, with national modifications, are found in other countries—in architecture in Germany, for example, and in some paintings made in England. As an example, we see *Mrs. Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (c. 1785) by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788).

1. The subject was born Elizabeth Linley, a beautiful woman and a leading soprano. In 1773, she had eloped with Sheridan, the dramatist perhaps best known for *The School for Scandal*.
2. This magnificent portrait, brilliantly painted, is placed in a pastoral setting not unlike Fragonard's parks but perhaps with a touch more reality. The asymmetrical design is ultimately derived from Van Dyck's portraits.
3. The trees—"all aflutter, like a lady's fan," as a contemporary wrote of another Gainsborough—are also comparable to Fragonard's foliage.

- V. In the next lecture, we will follow the course of art from the late 18th into the early 19th century by looking at three artists, two French and one Spanish.

Works Discussed:

Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin:

Soap Bubbles, probably 1733/1734, oil on canvas, 36 5/8 x 29 3/8" (93 x 74.6 cm), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.

The Kitchen Maid, 1738, oil on canvas, 18 1/8 x 14 3/4" (46.2 x 37.5 cm), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.

Jar of Olives, 1760, oil on canvas, 28 x 38 1/2" (71 x 98 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Glass of Water and Coffee Pot, c. 1761, oil on canvas, 12 3/4 x 16 1/4" (30.5 x 41 cm), Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.

François Boucher:

The Setting of the Sun and *The Rising of the Sun*, 1753, oil on canvas, 10' 5" x 8' 7" (318 x 261 cm), Wallace Collection, London, Great Britain.

Germaine Boffrand:

Salon de la Princesse, 1737–40, Hôtel de Soubise, Paris, France.

Jean-Baptiste Greuze:

The Village Bride, 1760–61, oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 46" (92 x 117 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard:

Denis Diderot, c. 1765, oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 25 1/2" (82 x 65 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

The Swing, 1766, oil on canvas, 32 x 25 1/4" (81 x 64.2 cm), Wallace Collection, London, Great Britain.

The Meeting, from the *Progress of Love*, 1771–73, oil on canvas, 10' 5" x 8' (317.5 x 243.8 cm), The Frick Collection, New York City, New York, USA.

Thomas Gainsborough:

Mrs. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, 1785–87, oil on canvas, 86 5/8 x 60 5/8" (220 x 154 cm), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.

Further Reading:

Vernon Hyde Minor, *Baroque and Rococo: Art and Culture*.

Helene Prigent and Pierre Rosenberg, *Chardin: An Intimate Art*.

Colin B. Bailey, ed., *The Age of Watteau, Chardin, and Fragonard: Masterpieces of French Genre Painting*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does Chardin differ from Boucher and other Rococo painters with whom he is often grouped?
2. Describe the lighthearted themes conveyed in the work of Boucher and Fragonard.

Lecture Thirty-Nine

Neoclassicism and the Birth of Romanticism

Scope: In this lecture, we explore *Neoclassicism*, a more severe style than its predecessor, the Rococo, characterized by an emphasis on line and strong design and a renewed interest in ancient and Renaissance Classicism. We look briefly at the work of Jean-Antoine Houdon, the greatest sculptor of his day, followed by the realistic, and sometimes horrific, images of Jacques-Louis David and Francisco Goya. We close by noting Goya's transition to the era of Romanticism in his late work.

Outline

- I. As the 18th century approached its last quarter, it evolved in unforeseen ways. Having begun with the fading glory of Versailles, it ripened into the insouciant era of Louis XV and the Rococo. Acquiring a moralizing air in the 1760s, it then veered into a severe mode in the 1770s–1780s.
 - A. The style accompanying this shift was called *Neoclassicism* and is easy to characterize. There is an emphasis on line, especially contour, and strong design. Color is important but localized and contained. Beginning in 1748 with archeological discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum, there was a renewed emphasis on ancient art and Renaissance Classicism. This was furthered by the influence of the French Academy in Rome, where many of the leading artists studied.
 - B. At just this juncture, the American Revolution burst onto the European consciousness, igniting long-suppressed anger over social and political injustices and propelling European liberal thought in the same direction. As America sought support in Europe, it sent one of its most famous citizens as minister to France, Benjamin Franklin.
 - C. We see a bust of Franklin (1779) by Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741–1828).
 1. This splendid marble bust is the work of the greatest living sculptor of the day, whose own political persuasion made him the sculptor of a handful of American revolutionary leaders, as well as French heroes of their subsequent revolution.
 2. Houdon carved the bust apparently without even having the opportunity of a formal portrait sitting. There are replicas of the portrait, but this one is the most sensitive and the most nuanced in descriptive detail.
- II. We now turn to Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), the greatest painter of the Neoclassical style. David's natural gifts and scrupulous rendering of reality would have been sufficient to secure his reputation, but he was also involved with important political events of his lifetime, and thus, his

paintings are a record of some of the key events of modern history, from the French Revolution through the coronation of Napoleon as emperor.

- A. We see first *The Oath of the Horatii* (1785).
 1. The story of this painting is told in Livy's *History of Rome*. When a disagreement between the people of Rome and the people of Alba threatened war, it was decided to settle the dispute by combat among three representatives of each side: three men from the Horatii family of Rome and three from the Curiatii family of Alba.
 2. In this picture, the three Horatii are depicted taking the oath before their father, who holds up their swords. In contrast to their stern, angular attitudes, their sisters huddle in despair on the right side. We know that one of them was engaged to one of the Curiatii, which adds poignancy to the moment. The figures are rhythmically organized by the triple arcade behind them.
 3. Although the picture apparently had no immediate political intent, it certainly was in the moral spirit of the time, and it anticipates the revolutionary sacrifices soon to come.
- B. Next we examine David's *Death of Socrates* (1787).
 1. It was Plato who described the death of Socrates, who was condemned to die for corrupting the young with his ideas. Socrates accepted the cup of hemlock and drank it; then, he rebuked his young students for their uncontrolled grief and lay down to die.
 2. David's decision was to combine the two sequential moments: Socrates is about to take the cup, but he is already remonstrating with his followers. David invents a variety of demonstrative poses and facial expressions for the men, but apart from Socrates himself, it is the figure of Plato that is most affecting.
 3. Again, the subject is about sacrifice—but this time, it is personal sacrifice in defense of truth and the sanctity of free thought, rather than in defense of the state.
- C. The antecedents, progress, and aftermath of the French Revolution that began in 1789 are too overwhelming to summarize in these lectures. Thus, we skip over those years to the watershed year of 1793, which began with the execution of King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in January and witnessed the murder of Marat in July. Our next image is *The Death of Marat* (1793) by David.
 1. Jean-Paul Marat was a doctor who had become a radical journalist. He was a powerful member of the Jacobin Club of Paris, which spawned Robespierre, who created the Committee of Public Safety, soon known as the *Terror*. The committee condemned to the guillotine many people perceived as enemies of the revolution.
 2. Marat's newspapers were widely read and influential, and his writing was extreme and bloodthirsty.

3. Charlotte Corday, Marat's murderer, was a young woman from Caen who had been no admirer of the king but could not stomach the excesses of the Jacobin extremists.
 4. Marat suffered from a disfiguring skin disease all over his body. To ease the pain, he spent hours in a medicinal bath, with a board placed over it to serve as his desk.
 5. Corday went to his apartment and sent a note to Marat in his bath, saying that she had the names of traitors to reveal. Admitted, she drew out a large kitchen knife and severed his carotid artery with a single stroke. She was guillotined four days later.
 6. Now David had a contemporary hero and martyr to paint with the concision he had brought to Roman and Greek history.
 7. The composition is a combination of realism and idealism; there is reference to Christian martyrdoms, and Marat's arm is comparable to Christ's arm in Michelangelo's *Pietà*. The immediacy of the body and the realism of the details shock viewers even today.
 8. The bathwater is red with blood: It stains the note that Corday had sent in and the sheet; it runs the length of Marat's arm, leading our eyes to the blood-stained knife, Marat's pen, and David's dedicatory signature, "To Marat, David." His face is turned toward us and, in its pathos, invites us to contemplate the betrayal. Ironically, only Marat's open sores have been suppressed.
 9. The funeral of Marat was also arranged by David. This painting, when completed, was carried in procession through the streets.
- D. David's horrific image unintentionally announced that revolutionary principles had led to violence and that the revolution had failed to achieve its ideals. David seems to have become mentally unstable for a time, and when another hero emerged from the chaos, David devoted himself to him completely. He was, of course, Napoleon Bonaparte.
- E. The revolutionary wars of liberation launched by the French armies had begun in 1792 with the invasion of Austria. General Bonaparte's string of victories in Europe and Egypt paved the way for the coup d'état of 1799 and his appointment as First Consul. We see here David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (1800).
1. The Italian campaign had begun in 1796 and was successful, but in 1799, the French lost Italy. Even so, this painting by David is retroactive in its force. It proclaims the past victory as permanent, dismissing the inconvenient present reality.
 2. At the feet of Napoleon's horse, we see three names on a rock: Carolus Magnus (Charlemagne), Hannibal, and Bonaparte, all of whom crossed the Alps. In reality, the First Consul rode a mule.
- F. Napoleon's armies spread their campaign of "liberation" across Europe—sometimes wildly welcomed by large sections of the populace, sometimes imposing themselves. Spain was an example of the latter.

1. In late 1807, the French conquered Portugal, then moved into Spain in 1808. The occupation there lasted from 1808 to 1813.
2. In April/May of 1808, Napoleon compelled King Charles IV of Spain to abdicate in favor of his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, at that time king of Naples.

III. One of the greatest of all Spanish artists, Francisco Goya (1746–1828) lived through many political and artistic changes.

- A. Beginning as a court artist, he designed tapestries in a Spanish version of the Rococo style. Prospering as a portraitist, he combined Neoclassical and Rococo elements. Under the French occupation, he painted portraits of the occupiers, as well as his countrymen. After the expulsion of the French army, he unleashed his pent-up emotions in powerful paintings and etchings. In his old age, he painted haunting personal images that encompass the emotional and biographical immediacy of Romanticism but in a style that is solely his own.
- B. We see first *The Parasol* (1777–1778), a design for a tapestry meant to hang in the Prado Palace. The painting is candid and observant but with an air of naïveté, illustrating Goya's own take on the French Rococo.
- C. In May and June 1808, when Joseph Bonaparte was installed as king of Spain, an open revolt against the French erupted, first in Madrid, then across Spain. We see Goya's *The Third of May 1808* (1814).
1. This is a pendant to *The Second of May*, which depicts the people attacking the *mamelukes*—the North African mounted troops of Napoleon—in the streets of Madrid. That painting is a scene of chaos and carnage, a record of a spontaneous and essentially barbaric uprising against the totally surprised invaders.
 2. By contrast, *The Third of May* is tautly, starkly organized—and utterly horrific. Illuminated by a large lantern in the center, a group of men is lined up against a night background, with a city in the distance. They are about to be executed.
 3. The members of the firing squad are lined up on a diagonal, but their faces are unseen; they are anonymous.
 4. Goya spares us nothing. We see a dead body in the foreground, the earth stained with blood, men in abject terror, and one who has become physically ill from fear.
 5. One heroic figure stands in full light at the center; he seems intended as a Christ figure.
- D. Our next work is *Tampoco*, an etching from Goya's series of *The Disasters of War*, a set of 83 etching and aquatint plates completed about 1815 but not published until 1863.
1. The title is translated "Not [in this case] either," which is understandable only if one knows the preceding etching, showing another execution, called "Nobody knows why."

2. Here, the officer contemplates his hanging victim with satisfaction; other hanged men are behind.
 3. This is one of the mildest of *The Disasters of War*, and the cumulative horror of the etchings is increased by the numbed monotone of their captions.
- E. We turn to a comparison between Rubens's *Saturn Devouring his Son* (1636) and Goya's treatment of the same subject.
1. In Greek legend, Mother Earth prophesied that one of Saturn's sons would overthrow him; to avoid this fate, Saturn devours all his children except Zeus, whose mother saved him. Saturn was also confused with Cronos, the god of time, and thus, the image can be read as Time devouring his young—that is, aging and death.
 2. In mythology, the story marks a transition from chaos to an orderly universe; Classical Humanists understood this transition. Rubens, for example, gives his painting, despite its gore, a Classical distance, a certain dignity that makes it bearable.
 3. Goya, who certainly knew the Rubens and knew the mythological significance as well, was having none of it when he painted his version: *Saturn Devouring One of his Sons* (1819–1823).
 4. This image is horrible beyond most imaginings. It is a statement about man's innate barbarity, about our capacity to kill one another, about our madness—because this Saturn is clearly insane.
- F. During the same period, Goya was felled by an attack of the unknown illness that had deafened him in the 1790s. He survived through the persistent efforts of his friend Dr. Arrieta, and his *Self-Portrait with Dr. Arrieta* (1820) was his testimony and expression of gratitude.
1. The doctor supports the patient, whose hands pluck at the bedclothes, and he offers Goya a glass of liquid, probably medicine. Goya's mouth and eyes are open, though he does not focus on anything. The doctor's eyes are dark with sleeplessness, but the pursed lips may hint at a degree of relief and satisfaction.
 2. The frontal pose is suggestive of paintings of the dead body of Christ supported by saints or angels, but then we notice that the two men are flanked by dark, insubstantial figures, grey heads that seem to fluctuate in and out of the black background. They are painted with the same harrowing unreality as demons and witches in other black paintings by Goya.
 3. The inscription at the bottom of this double portrait is much longer and more personal than the three brief words of David to Marat. We are now fully launched into the era of Romanticism, for the beginnings of which we will return to France in our next lecture.

Benjamin Franklin, 1779, marble, 20 ½" H (52 cm H), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Jacques-Louis David:

The Oath of the Horatii, 1785, oil on canvas, 10' 10" x 13' 11" (330 x 425 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

The Death of Socrates, 1787, oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 6' 5 ½" (130 x 196 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA.

The Death of Marat, 1793, oil on canvas, 5' 5" x 4' 2 ½" (162 x 128 cm), Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium.

Napoleon Crossing the Alps, 1800, oil on canvas, 8' 1" x 7' 7" (246 x 231 cm), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

Francisco Goya:

The Parasol, 1777–78, oil on canvas, 41 x 60" (104 x 152 cm), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

The Third of May 1808 and The Second of May 1808, 1814, oil on canvas, 8' 8 ¾" x 11' 4" (266 x 345 cm), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Tampoco, from *The Disasters of War*, c. 1815, etching and aquatint, 6 ¼ x 8 ¼" (15.7 x 20.8 cm), private collection.

Saturn Devouring One of his Sons, 1819–23, oil on plaster, mounted on canvas, 57 ½ x 32 ¾" (146 x 83 cm), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Self-Portrait with Dr. Arrieta, 1820, oil on canvas, 45 ¼ x 30 ¼" (114.62 x 76.52 cm), The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

Peter Paul Rubens:

Saturn Devouring his Son (Time Devouring his Young), 1636, oil on canvas, 5' 11" x 2' 10" (180 x 87 cm), Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Further Reading:

Antoine Schnapper. *David*.

Fred Licht, *Goya*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Choose a painting by David that we discussed in this lecture and describe its relationship to the historical events of the time.
2. Contrast Goya's painting during the French occupation of Spain with his later work as it moves toward Romanticism.

Works Discussed:

Jean-Antoine Houdon:

Lecture Forty

Romanticism in the 19th Century

Scope: We now turn to Romanticism, which we define less as a style than as an attitude or outlook that can be expressed in more than one artistic style. We look at several artists' "brands" of Romanticism, including those of Théodore Géricault, Eugène Delacroix, and William Turner. As we will see, the highly personal qualities of Romanticism make this style difficult to characterize.

Outline

- I. The painting by Goya we saw in the last lecture—his *Self-Portrait with Dr. Arietta*—can easily be described as an example of Romanticism in art. Indeed, it is precisely the personal, autobiographical nature of that painting, the personal anguish of the artist, that makes it a Romantic painting.
 - A. However, *Romanticism* is a tricky term to define. It arose so gradually and in so many places that it is an elusive concept. In France, it is closely connected with literature, especially with Victor Hugo, who urged the freeing of the artist from Classical restraints and rules.
 - B. That it was also concerned with political ideas connects it with Neoclassicism and suggests that these two "isms" are not necessarily opposed in content. Unlike Neoclassicism, which is clearly a stylistic term, Romanticism seems to be an *attitude* first and foremost—one that can find expression in more than one style.
 - C. We see first *Paganini* (1819), a chalk drawing by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), one of the great draftsmen of the 19th century. This portrait is a striking, fully Neoclassical rendering of Niccolò Paganini, the famous Italian violin virtuoso, in which the delicately drawn body supports a more forcefully modeled head.
 - D. A dozen years later, after one of Paganini's concert appearances in Paris, Eugène Delacroix produced this record of him, *Paganini* (1831).
 1. This is really an impression rather than a traditional portrait, and it may have been painted soon after Delacroix's return from hearing and seeing Paganini in concert.
 2. Note the hip-shot pose and the transported expression on the subject's face. This painting was meant to suggest what the artist saw and heard, not just to record a likeness. Painted rapidly and passionately, the painting parallels Paganini's own playing.
- II. Before we return to Delacroix, we will look at two other artists and paintings.

- A. The first of these is Baron Antoine-Jean Gros (1771–1835), who painted *Napoleon Bonaparte Visiting the Plague-Stricken at Jaffa* (1799) that we see here.
 1. In 1799, Napoleon conducted a campaign in the Holy Land; Jaffa is a port city there. The exotic locale and the Near Eastern architecture obviously appealed to the artist.
 2. We see Napoleon as a miracle worker, a healer. Unafraid, he touches an afflicted man. The obvious reference to biblical stories of Jesus healing the sick may seem odd in the anticlerical atmosphere of revolutionary France, but it helped guarantee the success of the painting.
 3. This is a prime example of art as propaganda, more complex than David's Napoleonic works but nearly as effective. Gros was a great admirer of Rubens, and he applied vibrant colors and manipulated light more freely than did David, whose disciple he remained.
 4. Some of the other figures include a large kneeling man and a wounded soldier.
- B. The second artist is Théodore Géricault (1791–1824); we see his *Raft of the Medusa* (1818–1819).
 1. On July 2, 1816, the *Medusa*, a French frigate carrying colonists and soldiers to Senegal, foundered on a reef off the coast of Africa. The six lifeboats available were commandeered by the incompetent captain—a political appointee—and his senior officers.
 2. The 150 people left behind had to carpenter together a raft to carry them from the wreckage. For 13 days, they floated, suffered, starved, died or went mad, and were driven to cannibalism. Only 15 survived and 2 of them published an account of the tragedy that quickly mushroomed into a major political scandal.
 3. Géricault's genius was to transform this contemporary event into a painting of epic, even mythic, resonance. His preparations for the huge painting included interviewing survivors, studying the movement of water, constructing a model of the raft, sketching corpses in morgues and the inmates of insane asylums, even collecting body parts from morgues, which he arranged as gruesome still lifes and painted as they decomposed.
 4. Géricault edited and composed these raw data into a dynamic, asymmetrical pyramid. The design sweeps upward from the dead bodies that anchor it, the father and son at left and the dragging body at right, to the muscular black man supported aloft by his comrade who waves a white cloth to attract the attention of a distant ship. An upsurge of communal hope barely balances the sense of doom conveyed by the dark billow of the sail and the great wave beyond it.
 5. This powerful diagonal composition was borrowed from Baroque art, to which Romantic painters often turned when mounting

dramatic narratives. This Neo-Baroque style is perhaps the proper antithesis of Neoclassicism.

6. The painting was not a particular success in the Salon of 1819; it was too new in style and content. In due time, the allegorical power of the great painting was recognized, but Géricault's physical and mental health had been ruined by the ordeal of its creation, and he died five years later.

III. We now turn our attention to Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), the greatest French Romantic painter and one of the greatest artists of the 19th century.

A. Géricault died in January 1824, when Delacroix was beginning his first monumental painting, *Massacre at Chios* (1824).

1. The painting shows a scene from the Greek war for independence from the Turks. The Ottoman fleet had attacked the rich and peaceful island of Chios. Ten thousand troops set upon the population of 100,000, and at the end of a month, the European press reported that 20,000 had been slaughtered and most of the rest carried into slavery. Only 900 remained on the island.
2. As Goya had done, so did Delacroix. The fury of these artists was stirred by the killing of civilian populations, modern renditions of the biblical massacre of the innocents. Delacroix honored the survivors with a striking, anti-heroic composition.
3. The individual Greek captives are painted with dignity, sadness, and infinite tenderness. Note the children gathered near their stoic father at the left, the couple who lean weakly on each other, the old woman who looks doubtfully up toward heaven, the dead mother and her living child, and the nude woman whose bound arms indicate that she will be sold into slavery.
4. The middle of the painting is open; the common pyramidal composition is inverted, so that a wedge of space opens in the center, revealing the chaos and destruction behind and below. The mounted Turkish soldier is the apex of a diagonal rising from the lower left.
5. The S-curve of the old woman and its upward continuation may be what Delacroix referred to in his journal on May 7, 1824: "My picture is acquiring a twist, an energetic movement that I must absolutely complete in it."

B. The night before the Salon opened, Delacroix paid a visit to the foreign section, where a rural landscape scene, *The Hay Wain* (1821), by the English painter John Constable (1776–1837) was on view.

1. Delacroix is reported to have been elated by the sparkling effect of Constable's vibrant flecks of paint, an effect that conveyed the sensation of natural light.
2. *The Hay Wain* deserves praise beyond this technical note, however. Constable loved the countryside, and he filled his paintings with

the measured pastoral tempo of country life. The changing weather, which dominates rural agricultural life, was the object of his acute attention.

C. Delacroix followed up his proud painting of the *Massacre* with another one inspired by the Greek civil war, *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* (1827).

1. This painting was an allegory following the severe defeat of Greece at Missolonghi. For a defeat, however, it is a noble picture.
2. The beautiful woman who personifies Greece spreads her hands as much in supplication as submission. Half kneeling on a great block of marble, suggesting a fragment from a ruined temple, from beneath which the haunting hand of a crushed patriot protrudes, she is "guarded" by a Turkish soldier behind her. But Delacroix has made certain that he is dwarfed in scale by the thrilling blue-and-white figure who dominates the painting.

D. In 1827, Ingres also painted a combination allegorical-historical work as a ceiling painting for the Louvre, where today it hangs on a wall. It was a commission from the restored Bourbon monarchy, and Ingres was eager for the opportunity to create a history painting in the tradition of Raphael. The painting is the *Apotheosis of Homer* (1827).

1. This symmetrical composition presents Homer as a virtual deity, enthroned before a Greek temple, while being crowned with a wreath by an angel who may represent Victory. Homer is seen as the progenitor of all the arts, and he is flanked by great creators from antiquity through the 18th century, including Apelles, in a blue robe, holding Raphael's hand; Mozart and Aristotle; Shakespeare and Tasso; and Racine and Poussin, who points to Homer, reminding us of the primacy of the ancients.
2. Apart from the amusement of identifying the figures, there is not much here today to hold our interest, nor does it seem a likely candidate for future admiration. It was worked out with stupefying attention to placement and detail, but it is devoid of life.

IV. The year 1830 saw the first of the mini-revolutions that marked 19th-century French political life. The "three glorious days" of the July Revolution overthrew the Bourbon restoration monarchy and, with the help of the Marquis de Lafayette, put Louis-Philippe on the throne as the "Citizen King."

A. *Liberty Leading the People* (1830), by Delacroix, may be the last truly credible allegorical painting in European art. The genre had become artificial, and the way of thinking that produced it was no longer widely shared. This painting is believable because Delacroix believed in it and put all his genius into it.

1. Liberty carries the French tricolor in her right hand and a musket in her left. To her left are a man with a saber and a man wearing a top

hat and carrying a musket. At her feet is a figure looking up at Liberty with admiration, connecting the allegory with reality. To her right is a boy with two pistols, charging with Liberty.

2. At the bottom of the painting are two dead bodies that serve as a barricade, blocking the forward motion of the picture.
- B.** France conquered Morocco in 1830, but the sultan was an unpredictable neighbor, inclined to interfere in French decisions. In 1832, an official diplomatic mission was sent to Morocco, and Delacroix was invited as a guest of one of the delegates. After this trip, he painted *Women of Algiers* (1834).
1. Delacroix filled notebook after notebook with drawings and watercolors, recording the exotic locale, people, costumes, events, and the Jewish populace of Algiers. His written comments are short, descriptive notes, absorbing and recording the atmosphere for future recall and use. The colors of Morocco, vivid in the North African light, made perhaps the greatest impression on him.
 2. The trip stimulated Delacroix for the rest of his life, and it modulated his art, individuating and intensifying his colors, accentuating his love of horses, and deepening and warming his sensuality. We see this last influence in this painting, which was the result of an experience at the end of the artist's stay, when he was able to gain access to a harem. In it, he saw a survivor of the world of antiquity, a simplicity unsullied by the modern European world.
 3. The "timeless torpor" and natural eroticism of these women, in relaxed poses that are never artificial and never cold, are communicated to us by colors newly infused with subtle warmth. The shadows are warm; the costumes, gorgeous but muted; the women are both inaccessible and intimate. It is a sensual dream, a fantasy, even a male fantasy, but not prurient, not sullied by lust.
 4. This painting embodies the palette of the mature Delacroix, based on his continuing study of Titian, Rubens, and other colorists.
- V.** At the same moment, a great colorist, whose work was also known to Delacroix, was painting across the English Channel, in London. He was Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851).
- A.** Turner infused nature with *his* spirit, his imaginings. Nature was filtered through his sensibility, and that sensibility, especially in his mature paintings, dictated the forms that nature took on his canvas.
- B.** Turner was a prolific painter who left 300 paintings and 20,000 watercolors, of which just one work must suffice here, *The Burning of the Houses of Parliament* (1834–1835).
1. When fire devastated the Houses of Parliament, Turner, an eyewitness, made two paintings of the scene. On the one hand, they are reports, showing Westminster Bridge and the medieval towers

of Westminster Abbey across the river. They show the crowds on the near bank and boats of spectators on the water.

2. But most of all, they show an infernal blaze that unites all the elements of the picture. Indeed, one historian has accurately observed that this painting unites the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water—in a cosmic display that emphasized what was lost.
 3. Turner had been born and raised near Parliament, and he raised its destruction to the level of a supernatural occurrence, a cataclysm. Man's insignificance in the face of nature's power is his moral here, as in other paintings. The magnificent symphony of color that it offered him must have elated him, even as the historic loss saddened him.
- C.** The coloristic expression typical of much of Romantic painting is found, in its different ways, in Turner and Delacroix. The next lecture will introduce us to the black and white world of Daumier's lithographs and the dark, earthy world of mid-century Realism.

Works Discussed:

J. A. D. Ingres:

Paganini, 1819, pencil drawing, 17 ½ x 12" (45.7 x 30.5 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Apotheosis of Homer, 1827, oil on canvas, 12' 8" x 16' 9 ½" (386 x 512 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Eugène Delacroix:

Paganini, 1831, oil on cardboard on wood panel, 17 ½ x 12" (44.7675 x 30.1625 cm), The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., USA.

Massacre at Chios, 1824, oil on canvas, 13' 1" x 11' 7 ¼" (419 x 354 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi, 1827, oil on canvas, 6' 10 ¼" x 4' 10" (209 x 147 cm), Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux, France.

Liberty Leading the People, 1830, oil on canvas, 8' 6 ¼" x 10' 8" (260 x 325 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Women of Algiers, 1834, oil on canvas, 6' x 7' 6" (1.80 x 2.29 m), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Baron Antoine-Jean Gros:

Napoleon Bonaparte Visiting the Plague-Stricken at Jaffa, 1799, oil on canvas, 17' 2" x 23' 6" (523 x 715 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Theodore Géricault:

Raft of the Medusa, 1818–19, oil on canvas, 16' 1" x 23' 6" (491 x 716 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

John Constable:

The Hay Wain, 1821, oil on canvas, 4' 3 ¼" x 6' 1" (130.2 x 185.4 cm),
National Gallery, London, Great Britain.

Joseph Mallord William Turner:

The Burning of the Houses of Parliament, 1834–35, oil on canvas, 36 ¼ x 48
½" (92 x 124.46 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania, USA.

Further Reading:

William Vaughan, *Romanticism and Art*.

Barthelemy Jobert, *Delacroix*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What are the key elements of Romanticism?
2. Compare Delacroix's viewpoint on nature in his later paintings of Algiers with Turner's treatment of nature.

Lecture Forty-One

Realism—From Daumier to Courbet

Scope: Romanticism was followed by or, more correctly, overlapped with the Realist movement of mid-century. In this lecture, we look at three of Realism's practitioners, Honoré Daumier, Jean François Millet, and Gustave Courbet. We see their unrelenting depictions of the changes taking place in France and across Europe in the mid-19th century.

Outline

- I. Honoré Daumier (1808–1879) is often slighted in surveys, because the work that made him famous was newspaper work, his lifelong flood of lithographs attacking the government, ridiculing lawyers, and generally deflating social and intellectual pretentiousness wherever he found it.
 - A. Lithography is a printmaking technique that exploits the mutual repulsion of grease and water.
 1. In lithography, a porous surface is used, often Bavarian limestone. An artist draws a design with grease crayons or washes on the stone. Through a complicated process, the design is fixed to the stone, where it may be repeatedly inked and printed.
 2. Lithography had only been invented in 1798, and it made the mass illustrated popular press of the 19th century possible, including the acid caricatures by Daumier and others.
 - B. We begin with Daumier's *Freedom of the Press* (1834). As we see, the typographer stands his ground, fists clenched, while his political targets fall. In the right background, the last Bourbon king, Charles X, has fainted and is being revived. Intentionally, and perhaps wisely, Daumier had not aimed this picture at the newly installed Citizen King, Louis Philippe.
 - C. But the government could not count on much leniency from Daumier, as we see in *Rue Transnonain, 15 April 1834* (1834).
 1. Riots had erupted in Lyons because the silk workers there could no longer live on their wages. Troops were sent in and fighting continued for four days. On April 14, before dawn, troops in Paris were fired upon from an apartment building in the Rue Transnonain. They panicked and rushed into the building, breaking down doors, firing their rifles, and stabbing at bedclothes with their bayonets.
 2. When the day dawned, scenes like the one Daumier imagined, or re-created from accounts, came to light. We see four dead family members: the grandfather, the wife, the husband, and the infant. The father—the worker—is cast in a heroic mold by Daumier, the

epitome of a man of the people. In Daumier, we meet the equal of Goya and Delacroix in their revulsion at the slaughter of innocents.

- D. *Adieu mon cher...* (1844) concerns women's suffrage and the *bluestockings*. These liberated Frenchwomen emulated the female novelist George Sand, and they adopted literary airs while putting aside their domestic duties. This is one of Daumier's funniest and most subtle prints from a series about the bluestockings. Note the unexpected characterization that Daumier gives to the father, who looks sweetly and happily at the child left in his care by Madame.
- E. In February 1848, Louis Philippe was overthrown, and a republic was proclaimed. Artists were invited to submit designs for a symbolic image of the republic. Out of 100 entries, 20 were selected as finalists, including Daumier's *The Republic* (1848).
 - 1. Only a small oil sketch, the design is monumental in feeling. Note the broad, massive grouping of the female allegorical figure of *The Republic*, suckling two of her children while another sits at her feet with a book.
 - 2. This nurturing concept of the republic needed only to be enlarged, but Daumier put it off—too long, as it happened, because only three months after the February Revolution, conservative reaction set in and brutal repressions followed.
- F. The year 1848 was one of revolutions across Europe, one result of which was widespread emigration. The effects were felt everywhere, including in America, to which many of the emigrants came. Daumier's plaster relief entitled *The Emigrants* (1848–1849) shows nude figures on the move, some with heavy loads. We see again Daumier's proletarian hero, like the dead father on the Rue Transnonain; the figures show the compressed power of certain figures by Michelangelo.
- G. Compare the relief with Daumier's oil *The Emigrants* (c. 1865–1870). This painting is a continuing part of the series of related works on *émigrés* or fugitives that Daumier produced starting in 1848. It has an urgency that is quite different from the muscular march of the sculpture, but the dominant compositional motives in both are the diagonal slant and the endless procession.

II. The brief life of the progressive republic in France gave way to the surprising landslide election of Louis Napoleon, nephew of the first Napoleon, recently returned from exile, as president of the republic. In 1852, in a coup d'état, he declared himself Emperor Napoleon III.

- A. An odd combination of enlightened urban planner and dictator, Louis Napoleon appointed Baron Haussmann as his city planner to lay out the broad boulevards that transformed Paris into the city we know today. In the process, old quarters were often demolished, leaving the poor and lower middle class with no housing. In an 1852 lithograph, Daumier's

apartment dweller literally looks on the bright side of his neighbors' loss: *At last the sun will shine on my potted plant...* (1852).

- B. Daumier also made many paintings and lithographs about artists, their exhibitions, and their studios. Our example is *In the Studios: Fichtre!... Épatant!... Sapristi!... Superbe!... ça parle! (Wow! Amazing! Gosh! Superb! It speaks!)* (1862). The superlatives issue from the mouth of the tall central figure, no doubt a connoisseur in his own mind. The responses of the other men are more varied. The man leaning into the picture with a pleased look may be Daumier himself.
- C. The population growth of Paris during Napoleon III's reign (called the *Second Empire*) was continuous, and the conditions were, of course, hardest on the lower classes of society. We see this depicted in *The Third-Class Carriage* (c. 1863–1865).
 - 1. The scene is quite crowded. In the foreground are an older woman with a basket, a mother nursing her child, and a sleeping boy.
 - 2. Note the *interior drawing*—that is, the drawing with the brush—that describes the mother's collar, her breast, her face, and her hands. The painting has great presence.
- D. Our last work by Daumier is *Street Show (Clown)* (c. 1868).
 - 1. The frantic waving of the clown (*saltimbanque*), the energized line, and the booming of the drum imply that this picture is about more than just street performers drumming up an audience.
 - 2. Interpreting this painting is tricky. It may be a premonitory work, anticipating the disaster of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871; it may have been a response to the political backlash that the French government's reactionary policies inspired; or it may even have been a celebration of the passage of a liberal press law and a freedom of assembly bill in May 1868.

III. Our next artist is Jean François Millet (1814–1875), one of the great Realist painters. Although he painted peasants, Millet never condescended or prettified his subjects and was never sentimental.

- A. We see first *The Sower* (c. 1850). The painting shows a powerful figure precisely situated against the sloping horizon. He strides forward, filling the picture. The figure's casting of the grain probably refers to a biblical proverb.
- B. Another famous Millet is *The Gleaners* (c. 1857).
 - 1. We see, obviously, that the three women are performing back-breaking labor, but part of the story is also taking place in the far background.
 - 2. There we see hay wagons, people loading hay, and an overseer on horseback. This is the main harvest; this is what the landlord reaps. The women in the foreground reap only the chaff.

IV. Gustave Courbet (1819–1877) was born at Ornans, in southeastern France, near the Swiss border. At 21, he traveled to Paris, copied in the Louvre, and studied at the Atelier Suisse. Soon he developed a powerful Naturalism.

- A. Our first work shows *The Stone Breakers* (1849, destroyed at Dresden), a compelling painting depicting two anonymous peasants, again, at hard labor.
- B. Our next example is *A Burial at Ornans* (1849).
 1. The work feels unedited, a transcript of the experience of the rural people of a corner of France distant from Paris, but the painting was made to be exhibited in Paris. The deep attachment of the French people to their individual regions is well attested and seems almost a mythical part of being French.
 2. In this painting, nothing is more or less important than any other thing. A kind of equality marches across the canvas. We sense the range of human experience, with the clergy on the left and the townspeople on the right.
 3. The isolation of the cross against the sky on the left seems intentionally ironic. This was painted in post-revolutionary, anticlerical France, and Courbet also seems critical of the clergy in this painting.
 4. In the center of this huge picture is a hole in the ground—the grave. The painting is antiheroic, as well as anticlerical.
- C. Next, we see *The Artist's Studio* (1854–1855).
 1. A fuller title of this painting, though still an adaptation of the French, is *Interior of My Studio: A Real Allegory of Seven Years of My Life as a Painter*. This title is almost as long as the painting.
 2. When Courbet began the painting, he wrote to a friend that it would prove that “I am not yet dead, or realism either, for this is realism... In it are the people who thrive on life and those who thrive on death; it is society at its best, its worst, its average.”
 3. He continued, “I am in the center, painting; on the right are the ‘shareholders,’ that is, my friends, the workers, the art collectors. On the left the others...the common people, the destitute, the poor, the wealthy, the exploited, the exploiters; those who thrive on death.” Courbet’s irony is evident; his social and political concerns are imbedded in this painting.
 4. Dense with figures and predominantly dark in tonality, the painting is difficult to decipher in detail. Note the poet and critic Charles Baudelaire, who is seated at the far right; the life-size *lay figure* (an articulated wooden figure that artists use in lieu of a model) pointedly hung in the attitude of a crucifixion on the left just behind the easel (the side of “those who thrive on death”); and in the center, the artist, his nude model, a small boy, and a dog.

5. Everyone in the center group is admiring the landscape that Courbet is still painting. The female nude has nothing to wear and nothing to do except admire it; the boy looks up in awe at the magical imitation of reality that the painter has made; and the artist himself is confidently demonstrating his craft and achievement.
6. Many have noted that this landscape painting has a greater brightness, in a sense, a greater reality, than the rest of the huge canvas, as though everything pales in comparison to this window onto the real world, while the artificial congregation of the “shareholders” and the “others” stands or sits about and takes little or no notice of the artist and his work.
7. The “seven years” of Courbet’s life referred to in the title began with the revolutionary year of 1848, and the complex, subjective social and personal allegory that his ego has permitted him to force on the public may have roots in that fact.

D. We are still in the mid-1850s, and Courbet lived until 1877, but much would change by then: war, civil war, the rise of a new society and a new artistic movement. Courbet, caught up by forces he helped set in motion, died in exile in Switzerland.

Works Discussed:

Honoré Daumier:

Freedom of the Press, 1834, lithograph, 12 x 17" (30.4 x 43 cm), Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France.

Rue Transnonain, 15 April 1834, 1834, lithograph, 11 ¼ x 17 ¼" (28.5 x 44.1 cm), Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Germany.

Goodbye, my dear, I'm going to meet with my publishers (Adieu, mon cher, je vasi chez mes editeurs), 1844, lithograph, 11 ½ x 8 ½" (29.2 x 21.5 cm), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.

The Republic, 1848, oil on canvas, 28 ¾ x 23 ½" (73 x 59.6 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

The Emigrants, 1848–49, plaster, 11 x 26" (28 x 66 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

The Emigrants, c. 1865–70, oil on canvas, 15 x 26" (38.1 x 67.95 cm), Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

At last the sun will shine on my potted plant... (Voilà donc mon pot de fleurs qui va avoir du soleil...), 1852, lithograph, 10 x 13 ¾" (25.4 x 34.9 cm), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.

Wow! Amazing! Gosh! Superb! It speaks! (Fichtre!... Épatant!... Sapristi!... Superbe!... ça parle!), from *In the Studios*, 1862, lithograph, 10 x 8 ½" (25.4 x 21.5 cm).

The Third-Class Carriage, c. 1863–65, oil on canvas, 25 ¾ x 35 ½" (65.4 x 90.2 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Street Show, c. 1868, black chalk and watercolor on laid paper, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Jean-François Millet:

The Sower, c. 1850, oil on canvas, 40 x 32 ½" (101.6 x 82.6 cm), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

The Gleaners, 1857, oil on canvas, 33 x 44" (83.5 x 110 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Gustave Courbet:

The Stone Breakers, 1849 (destroyed 1945), oil on canvas, 6' 2" x 9' 9" (1.9 x 3 m), formerly the Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, Germany.

A Burial at Ornans, 1849, oil on canvas, 10' 4" x 21' 9" (315 x 668 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

The Artist's Studio (Interior of My Studio: A Real Allegory of Seven Years of My Life as a Painter), 1854–55, oil on canvas, 11' 10" x 19' 8" (361 x 598 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

Further Reading:

Henri Loyette, et al., *Honoré Daumier*.

James H. Rubin, *Gustav Courbet*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Discuss the historical importance of Daumier's lithographs.
2. How would you differentiate Realism and Naturalism?

Lecture Forty-Two

Manet and Monet—The Birth of Impressionism

Scope: In this lecture, we look at two quite famous artists: Manet, who has been seen as the wellspring of Modernism, and Monet, whose *Impression: Sunrise* gave the name to the well-known style Impressionism. We'll examine elements in their paintings that point to a break with art of the past, as well as the contemporary subject matter that each artist found compelling.

Outline

- I. It has long been an art-historical commonplace that modern art begins with Edouard Manet (1832–1883). That statement seems true, although it somewhat oversimplifies a complex man and artist by making him seem to be one who broke with the past and consciously set out to be "Modern."
- II. The French Salon was the annual official art exhibition sponsored by the Academy, but it was also open to artists who were not members of the Academy. In Manet's day, the jury was composed of members of the French Institute, whose conservative taste was mostly unchallenged; thus, younger artists of independence and originality were often excluded from this opportunity to be seen by a wide public.
 - A. Manet was 31 when he exhibited the masterpiece that has established his place in art history, *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863).
 1. One would be hard pressed to recall a similar picnic, either in art or in real life. We have four figures: two well-dressed Parisian gentlemen and two women, one nude and one in a negligee who wades in a pond or brook behind them.
 2. The picnic basket is at the left; its partly spilled contents include a brioche, cherries and figs, a baguette, and a silver flask. The basket resides among the naked woman's discarded clothes, and together, they constitute a lovely array of color, a beautifully painted still life within the larger picture.
 3. This was a scandalous painting because the people were clearly real Parisians in a Parisian park setting, but they were behaving incorrectly, although there is not the slightest overtly sexual suggestion in their actions or looks. Indeed, the two men seem virtually unaware of their companion's nakedness, and one gestures in a conversational manner.
 4. The naked woman's skin tone is a bright, flat white, with little contrast of light and shade, little modeling in the traditional sense, and so little flesh tone that she seems to have spent her life thus far indoors. Only her face is given a bit of color.

5. Her body is posed in pure profile, which emphasizes the flatness introduced by the lack of modeling. She is almost as flat as a playing card, except that she turns her head to look directly at the viewer; this not only gives her life, but it is the main connection between the pictorial space and ours. Her expression explains nothing; it only adds to our puzzlement about the situation.
 6. Manet was a great painter of black and of white. Here, that is seen in the white pants of the man beside the naked model, the diaphanous white negligee of the other woman, and the black coats and hat worn by the men. Black and white are the major accents in the composition; the rest, except for the fine still life, is mostly given over to dark trees and green vegetation.
 7. This painting was rejected by the Salon of 1863, but there was a great uproar because so many works had been rejected by the artistic authorities that year. Thus, the Emperor Napoleon III decreed that a separate pavilion—the Salon des Refusés (“Salon of the Refused Works”)—be opened to display the rejected works.
- B.** Manet had borrowed his composition and content from two works of the Italian Renaissance. The grouping and gestures of the three foreground figures were taken literally from a corner group in an engraving of a lost drawing by Raphael, and the theme was borrowed from a famous painting by Giorgione, the *Pastoral Concert* (c. 1510).
1. Manet had copied Giorgione’s painting and must have pondered the subject, which also shows two clothed men seated, one of whom plays a lute, and two nude women, one seated with a recorder and the other standing by a well, pouring water from a clear glass pitcher.
 2. Why didn’t this painting scandalize the public? Because, of course, it was a Renaissance Old Master painting, in which nudes were not unexpected. It had the patina of respectability.
- C.** Although painted in 1863, *Olympia* was not entered in the Salon until 1865. Manet was wise enough not to try to show the *Luncheon* and *Olympia* at the same time. In fact, in 1865, *Olympia* was accepted into the official Salon.
1. Olympia is a prostitute. Her name was a common one for prostitutes of this period, including a famous fictional prostitute in *The Lady of the Camellias* (1848–1852) by Alexander Dumas fils.
 2. The flowers presented by the black woman to Olympia seem to be from us; the viewer serves as the “gentleman caller.”
 3. Again, Olympia’s body lacks modeling; she is quite bright and is placed against bright white sheets.
 4. We can compare *Olympia* with Titian’s *Venus of Urbino* (1538), which Manet copied in Florence in 1853. Venus here is also a prostitute, a courtesan.

5. Note the lolling of Venus’s head, the fleshiness of her right arm, and the languorous contour of her body. In contrast, Olympia sits upright, her arm forms a strong right angle supporting her body, and her gesture seems direct and businesslike.
 6. Titian’s Venus has a small dog curled up at the foot of the bed; Manet’s Olympia has a black cat, hissing at the viewer.
 7. In place of the two maids in the background of the Titian, Manet has included the black woman with the bouquet.
- D.** Our next example by Manet is *At the Café* (1879).
1. The *café concert* was a popular type of entertainment, combining a café setting and a cabaret. Manet painted several of these scenes in a cabaret on the Boulevard Rochechouart. This is a brilliantly painted and wittily complex painting, because Manet does not show the stage directly.
 2. We see a gentleman in a top hat seated at the bar and a woman next to him, who is obviously a streetwalker. Between the two of them is a barmaid. Behind her is a mirror, reflecting the singer onstage.
- E.** The next year, Manet developed the first symptoms of a degenerative disease, *locomotor ataxia*, which so weakened him that he stopped making large paintings in favor of floral still lifes and pastel portraits. The great exception to this diminution in his work is his last masterpiece, the *Bar at the Folies-Bèrgères* (1881–1882).
1. This painting depicts a barmaid facing us, although not looking at us. There is also a mirror behind her, showing a balcony level within the establishment.
 2. On the right-hand side, we see the reflection of the back of the barmaid, which would be impossible in reality, and the reflection of a gentleman. This painting offers a slightly more complex version of *Olympia*, because the gentleman seems to be propositioning the barmaid.
- F.** It is no exaggeration to say that modern art begins with Manet, a claim that can be made because of his vivid, painterly technique and his high-toned palette and because of his often enigmatic, personal subject matter.
1. But at the same time, we must not forget that his brilliant, flashing brushwork owes its very being to Manet’s close observation of the painting of Velázquez in the Prado and the portraits of Frans Hals.
 2. Absorbing these sources of technical bravura, as he had appropriated composition and content ideas from the Renaissance, Manet combined them with the intimate knowledge of his Parisian world, which he painted with greater complexity and weight than any of his contemporaries.

III. Claude Monet (1840–1926) was born in Paris but raised in Le Havre, where his father was in the wholesale grocery business.

- A. Monet began drawing caricatures when he was a teenager. Meeting the landscape painter Eugène Boudin, Monet was persuaded to accompany the older artist on painting expeditions in the area and to paint directly from nature in the open air.
- B. Open-air painting had long been practiced by landscape artists but almost always for sketching, not for completing paintings out-of-doors. Nonetheless, the practice of open-air painting had been growing in popularity; what was to make it revolutionary was Monet's genius, because no one before him had combined the brilliant light effects observed outdoors with the compositional imagination and technical skill that he developed.
- C. After a year of military service, Monet entered the Paris studio of Charles Gleyre in 1862, where he met Renoir and Sisley. These three were among the painters who would become known as *Impressionists*.
- D. Our first example shows *Terrace at Saint-Adresse* (1867), which was painted during a period when poverty forced Monet to live with his family, now at Ste. Adresse on the coast, while his mistress, Camille, was in Paris expecting their child.
 - 1. The painting looks down from a high point of view and is divided into three broad bands of land, sea, and sky, pinned together by the two flagpoles.
 - 2. We see a beautiful flower garden and a wonderful parasol, like a blossom itself, in the bottom center.
- E. Monet's talent exploded at this time, and he turned out some of his most gorgeous paintings, including *The Magpie* (1869). This is a brilliant painting of white on white—snow and sunlight.

IV. On July 19, 1870, France declared war on Prussia, an act of foolishness on the part of Emperor Napoleon III that led to catastrophe.

- A. The first phase of the war lasted only six weeks; the French were defeated in several major battles, and the emperor was captured at Sedan on September 2. On September 4, the Assembly removed the emperor from office and set up a republic and a provisional government.
- B. On September 19, 1870, the siege of Paris began. In December, the French government removed to Bordeaux.
- C. In January 1871, the Prussians defeated the French in several battles. On January 28, Paris surrendered, and an armistice was established; in February, the new Assembly came under conservative domination.
- D. March 18, 1871 saw a revolt in Paris and the start of the Paris Commune. The government moved to Versailles, from which a new siege of Paris was directed, this time by French troops in cooperation with the Prussians. During the two months of the Commune, France

ceded Alsace and Lorraine to Prussia. We see *The Burning of Paris* (1871) from this period.

- E. The Commune was more than the final phase of the Franco-Prussian debacle; it was the origin of a lasting national trauma. As we see in this photo, the *Assassination of the Hostages* (1871), the Communards publicly assassinated their hostages, among whom was the archbishop of Paris.
- F. But it was the citizens of Paris who suffered most: About 20,000 supporters of the Commune were killed, and 7,500 were later deported. The revolt ended with the “Bloody Week” of May 21–28, during which the last 147 supporters of the Commune were massacred, as we see in another photo, *Corpses of Executed Communards* (1871).
- G. Art historians often talk about the “painting of modern life” in late-19th-century France, but the politics of modern life affected everyone, artists included, although not every artist reflected politics in his or her work.
 - 1. Monet had already seen military service and had no love for the emperor; thus, he crossed the Channel, followed by Camille and their son, Jean. In England, he joined Camille Pissarro and their future dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel.
 - 2. From this period, we see *The Thames below Westminster* (1871). The dark pier in the foreground played against the Houses of Parliament makes this a memorable picture.
- V. Manet, who had a surprisingly resonant response to the politics of the day, produced two lithographs at around this time, including *Civil War* (1871).
 - A. The aged and poverty-stricken Daumier also was still in the game, producing a lithograph of a woman—Monarchy—in a coffin; the picture is captioned, *And all this time they maintained she never felt better!* (1872).
 - B. Monet returned from London and soon produced the wonderful painting that accidentally gave its name to a disparate group of painters, then to a whole movement, *Impression: Sunrise* (1873 [misdated 1872]).
 - 1. This painting was number 98 in the first group exhibition of those painters who would soon become known as the Impressionists. It has been reported that Monet had not yet titled his painting when the final list was being compiled and, upon being pressed, decided on this title, in French, *Impression, soleil levant*.
 - 2. It was painted at the port of Le Havre, where Monet had grown up. The painting is quick and sketchy; the sun glows through the heavy fog, casting its light onto the water. The emphasis is on capturing quickly the impression of light on water.
 - 3. An art critic, Louis Leroy, wrote a review of the exhibition and played with heavy-handed irony on the word *impression*. Another

critic borrowed Leroy's satiric use of the painting's title to refer to the "School of Impressionism."

4. As a style name, *Impressionism* is even less helpful than most, yet people generally think they know what it is. We will revisit this subject again in a subsequent lecture.

Works Discussed:

Édouard Manet:

Déjeuner sur l'herbe (Luncheon on the Grass), 1863, oil on canvas, 6' 9" x 10' 8" (2.1 x 2.6 m), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

Olympia, 1863, oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 6' 2" (1.31 x 1.90 m), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

At the Café, 1879, oil on canvas, 18 5/8 x 15 3/8" (47.3 x 39.1 cm), Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland, USA.

Bar at the Folies-Bergères, 1881–82, oil on canvas, 37 3/4 x 51" (95.3 x 129.7 cm), Courtauld Institute Galleries, London, Great Britain.

Civil War, 1871, lithograph, 15 3/4 x 20" (40 x 50.8 cm), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.

Claude Monet:

Terrace at Sainte-Adresse, 1867, oil on canvas, 38 1/2 x 51 1/4" (98.1 x 129.9 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA.

The Magpie, 1869, oil on canvas, 18 1/2 x 51 1/4" (89 x 130 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

The Thames below Westminster, 1871, oil on canvas, 18 1/2 x 28 1/2" (47 x 72.5 cm), National Gallery, London, Great Britain.

Impression: Sunrise, 1873, oil on canvas, 19 x 24" (48.2 x 60.9 cm), Musée Marmottan, Paris, France.

Honoré Daumier:

And all this time they maintained she never felt better! (Et pendant ce temps-là ils continuent à affirmer!), 1872, lithograph, 12 1/2 x 11 5/8" (31.7 x 29.5 cm), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

Further Reading:

Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism: or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s*.

Sandro Sproccati, *Monet*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What elements in Manet's work were so shocking to his contemporaries?
2. What is your immediate response to the question asked at the end of the lecture: Why does Monet make no reference whatsoever in his art to the central political trauma of France?

Lecture Forty-Three

Monet and Degas

Scope: In this lecture, we continue with Monet, looking at examples of his series paintings of haystacks, a train station, Rouen Cathedral, and waterlilies. We also explore the work of Edgar Degas and some of the subjects that attracted him, including the world of the ballet and other forms of entertainment.

Outline

- I. The last lecture ended with an open question: Why did Monet not paint anything referring to the Franco-Prussian War or the Commune? The question is loaded and probably unfair.
 - A. Monet had no firsthand knowledge of the events of 1870–1871, and he was a painter of landscapes, not of history or genre pictures. Still, he could have painted the bleak Parisian scene to which he had returned.
 - B. In fact, none of the Impressionists, not even the politically engaged Pissarro, touched on the subject of Paris in the aftermath of the Commune. In a sense, the closest Monet came to doing so was in a pair of remarkable and thrilling paintings that he made on the same day, one of which is *The Rue Montorgueil, Paris, Celebration of June 30, 1878* (1878).
 1. This was the first national celebration since the crisis of 1870–1871, held in conjunction with the World's Fair that had opened that spring.
 2. In looking at this painting, we can feel the ecstatic release of the pent-up emotions that must have simmered for seven years.
 - C. Monet and his contemporaries found compelling subject matter in the city, especially the café life and the world of entertainment, as well as the new architecture that followed the construction of the grand boulevards built during the Second Empire and the nearby countryside and coast, easily reached on the new railroads.
 1. We see, for example, the *La Gare Saint-Lazare (Arrival of a Train)* (1877), by Monet.
 2. The Saint-Lazare railroad station perfectly typifies the new subject matter, because it is *modern* architecture, built to accommodate the *modern* railroad, which gave access to the world beyond Paris.
 3. Striking in this painting is the steel-and-glass shed, obscured by the steam of the train entering the station. In a series of paintings of the station, Monet plays with the contrast between the insubstantial—steam—and the solid, modern architecture.

D. This series on *La Gare Saint-Lazare* evolved, but it was not initially conceived as a series in the way that Monet would later systematically plan them. In the 1890s, he thoroughly explored the potential of painting in series. We see here three examples.

1. The first is *Haystacks, End of Summer* (1891).
2. Around 1880, the concentration on light in Impressionist painting threatened to overwhelm the substance of its subjects. Monet found a solution to this problem in his series by having an object serve as the composition of the painting.
3. Here, the haystack has a pyramidal shape with bands of landscape neatly behind it. With this structure in place, Monet could then concentrate on the effects of light on his subject.
4. Perhaps the most radical series that Monet painted was of the Rouen Cathedral. We see *Rouen Cathedral, Morning Sun, Blue Harmony* (1893). The entire canvas is filled with the façade of the cathedral.
5. As a contrast to *Morning Sun*, we see *Rouen Cathedral, West Façade, Sunlight* (1894). *Morning Sun* seems more infused with a bright, deep blue, while *Sunlight* shows the strong effects of full day. The three-dimensionality of the façade is more fully expressed in the second painting.

II. Monet lived and worked at Giverny, on the Seine near Rouen, for more than 40 years. Although he traveled often and widely, Giverny was his center. There he gradually created his own world to paint, in the Norman garden and the waterlily garden. He also painted nearby on the Seine.

- A. We see here *Morning on the Seine, near Giverny* (1897). At first glance, the painting exhibits a degree of abstraction that makes the viewer think it could be inverted; however, Monet clearly shows the horizon line.
- B. When he was painting this poetic series on the Seine, Monet was also working continuously on paintings of his waterlily garden. When he exhibited 48 of them in 1909, he called them *Waterlilies, Waterscapes*. He painted from the bank or in a small rowboat, but he never showed the bank or the edge of the pond—in other words, he never showed the horizon line.
 1. We see a photo of Monet's Giverny water garden (September 1992), which shows that studying the garden could be a rich and somewhat puzzling visual experience. The only sky and light seen are in reflection, and the floating waterlilies confound our sense of depth and space.
 2. When the opportunity was offered Monet to paint two series of paintings for two large oval rooms in a museum in Paris, the artist did something quite different.

3. As we see in this photo showing an interior view of one of the Waterlily Rooms (Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris), Monet made a great imaginative leap: In the past, he had painted the waterlily garden from the bank or from a boat, but always it was a pond surrounded by land. Now he inverted the situation, and we are, when in the galleries, standing on a magical island in the middle, with the waterlily garden surrounding us.
4. We see the left section of *Waterlilies: The Morning* (c. 1917–1925). The light seems to emerge from the water, and we see the sky through the surface of the water.
5. There is something deeper here than the study and recording of colored light on objects, something as deep as the reflection of sky on water, as deep as memory. In the final analysis, Monet was looking for a deeper reality below the surface, and as far as he could probe, as much as he could discover, he shared it with us.

III. Edgar Degas (1834–1917) was born in Paris of a wealthy family. His respect for past masters of art was balanced by his passion for the contemporary world that Paris offered him. He began work on a number of history paintings but was soon drawn to the painting of everyday life.

- A. From the beginning, Degas was a great portrait artist, but he never painted portraits for a living, and most of his portraits remained unseen in his private collection. They were mostly of himself and his family, friends, and fellow artists.
 1. We see an example here, *The Bellelli Family* (1858–1862). Degas' father was born in Naples, and his Aunt Laura, to whom the artist felt very close, married a minor Italian nobleman, Baron Bellelli, but the marriage was unhappy.
 2. The evidence of that unhappiness is in the astonishing painting of the family that Degas began when he was 24 years old.
 3. Baron Bellelli is at right, and Laura Degas Bellelli is at left with one daughter, Giovanna, while the other daughter, Giulia, is seated.
 4. The baron's chair is shoved uncomfortably close to the fireplace, and his features are painted in a vague and unspecific way. He is placed before a cluttered mantelpiece that is topped by a mirror that reflects the other side of the room.
 5. In contrast, his wife stands nobly on the other side of the painting, dominating the space. She holds her closest daughter, Giovanna, close with one arm. Giulia, the more independent daughter, sits on one leg and turns slightly toward her father.
- B. Our next example is *The Dancing Class* (1871–1872).
 1. This is a tiny jewel of a painting showing Monet's love of the ballet, but what kind of ballet pictures did he make?
 2. He rarely painted the ballet on stage in performance. Instead, he painted dancers in rehearsal rooms, waiting in the wings, and

taking bows. He wanted to capture the unobserved world of the ballet.

3. In this painting, a mirror reflects a window, the source of the light that floods the lower right corner of the scene. Note the sliver of light coming between the curtains into the hallway.
 4. Every object in the painting contributes to its composition. The violin case, for example, is part of the structure of the painting.
- C. Degas loved all kinds of entertainment, as we see in *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando* (1879). The subject here is swinging by her teeth. Monet catches her movement in the upper left quarter of the painting, aligned with the ribs of this domed space.
- D. *Miss La La* is a dramatic painting filled with movement, quite in contrast to *L'Absinthe (At the Café)* (c. 1876).
1. This painting has the sense of a world observed or captured, but it was actually painted in the studio with models.
 2. The two figures are confined in the upper right-hand corner of the painting. The woman looks sad but is coloristically beautiful. The shadows of the figures are as isolated as they are.
- E. Finally, we look at *The Breakfast after the Bath* (c. 1895).
1. This painting was also a studio setup with hired models. A woman has stepped out of the bath and is vigorously drying her hair; her stoic maid stands waiting to hand her mistress a brilliant blue cup.
 2. In looking at this painting and others like it, we do not feel as if we are voyeurs. The women are self-absorbed; they do not give the sense that they are being looked at.
- F. Degas died in a much changed world, with the First World War raging. He lived his last years in what a friend called "his vague and grandiose solitude." He had lived beyond his time.

Works Discussed:

Claude Monet:

The Rue Montorgueil, Paris, Celebration of June 30, 1878, 1878, oil on canvas, 32 x 20" (81 x 50.5 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

La Gare Saint-Lazare (Arrival of a Train), 1877, oil on canvas, 31 ½ x 38 ½" (80.3 x 98.1 cm), Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

Haystacks, End of Summer, 1891, oil on canvas, 23 ¾ x 39 ½" (60.3 x 100 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

Rouen Cathedral, Morning Sun, Blue Harmony, 1893, oil on canvas, 35 ¾ x 24 ¾" (90.8 x 60.3 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

Rouen Cathedral, West Façade, Sunlight, 1894, oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 25 7/8" (100.05 x 65.8 cm), National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., USA.

Morning on the Seine, near Giverny, 1897, oil on canvas, 38 3/8 x 29" (96.5 x 73.6 cm), private collection.

Waterlilies: The Morning (left section), from *Waterlilies series*, c. 1917–25, oil on canvas, Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, France.

Edgar Degas:

The Bellelli Family, 1858–62, oil on canvas, 6' 6 ¾" x 8' 2 ½" (200 x 250 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

The Dancing Class, 1871–72, oil on wood, 7 3/4 x 10 5/8" (19.7 x 27 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando, 1879, oil on canvas, 46 x 30 ½" (116.8 x 77.5 cm), National Gallery, London, Great Britain.

L'Absinthe (At the Café), c. 1876, oil on canvas, 36 x 27" (91.3 x 68.7 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

The Breakfast after the Bath, c. 1895, pastel and brush drawing, 48 x 36" (121.9 x 91.4 cm), private collection.

Further Reading:

Paul Hayes Tucker, George T. M. Shackelford (contributor), and Maryanne Stevens (contributor), *Monet in the 20th Century*.

Ian Dunlop. *Degas*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Choose two contrasting paintings from one of Monet's series and describe their differences.
2. Give examples from the artist's work of some of the subjects that seemed to attract Degas.

Lecture Forty-Four

Renoir, Pissarro, and Cézanne

Scope: We continue with the Impressionists in this lecture, noting the hallmarks of that style but keeping in mind that the Impressionist artists did not necessarily follow all these “rules” at all times. As we examine the work of Auguste Renoir, Camille Pissarro, and Paul Cézanne in detail, we will underscore the importance of approaching each artist and, indeed, each work of art individually.

Outline

- I. Among the characteristics associated with Impressionist painting are:
 - A. The use of a pale grey or even a white ground applied to the canvas, rather than a dark one. Manet had already done this, and the effect is to increase the intensity of brightness, of light, in the final painting.
 - B. The use of color, blues and violets, for example, for shadows, because the artists had observed that shadow is not black.
 - C. The application of small strokes of complementary colors, not mixed on the palette but side by side on the canvas, which the eye blends optically.
 - D. The flickering quality of light that results from this application.
 - E. The delight in painting sky and water and the sky reflected in water.
 - F. A sense of impermanent, volatile flux, of the dissolution of distinctly contoured form.
 - G. Although these characteristics are associated with Impressionism, we should not expect to find them in equal measure in each artist or even in each painting by the same artist. In short, if we approach Impressionist painting with these rules in hand, we will be more confused than enlightened. We must always take paintings one at a time and see what the artist actually does, rather than look for the application of a theory.
- II. We begin with Auguste Renoir (1841–1919) and his *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1881).
 - A. *Luncheon* is a response to the crisis of Impressionism mentioned in the last lecture. You will recall that this crisis involved the dissolution of objects as a result of the artist’s concentration on light.
 - B. Renoir found his solution to this problem in lessons learned from Titian and Michelangelo about both color and form during a long visit to Italy.
 - C. *Luncheon* has many figures, most of which are gathered in the right-hand side of the painting. The front of the picture, however, seems open to admit the viewer into the group.
 - D. The painting has a relaxed quality, and the characters seem to be connected in various ways. We see, first, a seated young woman with her dog and a standing man. Behind them is a woman leaning on the railing, conversing with a young man in brown. Behind them, two men, one in a top hat, are conversing. In between them is a woman drinking wine, lost in her own thoughts. Finally, we see a group of three in the back and a large, important group of three in the foreground.
 - E. The scene takes place outdoors, but we’re hardly aware of the landscape. The Seine is only glimpsed through the foliage around the porch of the restaurant.
 - F. Colors hold this picture together, such as the yellow hats of the seated lady, the man beside her, and the woman in the background. The red or red-orange in the awning connects to the orange in the bow on a woman’s sleeve, an orange patch on a brown coat, a red-orange flower on another woman’s hat, and so on.
 - G. Renoir never surpassed this painting in its solidity of composition, beauty of color, and sense of *joie de vivre*.
- III. Our next artist is Camille Pissarro (1830–1903), born in St. Thomas, in the West Indies, of a Portuguese Jewish father and a Creole mother.
 - A. Older than most of the Impressionists-to-be, Pissarro was among the first of them to give subtitles to his paintings that indicated a time of day or a weather condition, as in this painting, *L’île Lacroix, Effect of Fog at Rouen* (1888), among the subtlest he ever painted.
 - 1. Blue-grey permeates the painting; there is very little distinction between sky and water.
 - 2. The fog is given structure through the verticals of the posts along the water’s edge, the strong smokestack on the right side, and smaller verticals, as well as their reflections in the water.
 - B. It is probably true that Pissarro never created a single great masterpiece on the order of Renoir’s *Luncheon* or Monet’s greatest waterlily paintings, but he did paint a large number of bold and beautiful paintings in his long lifetime.
- IV. Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) worked closely with Pissarro in the early 1870s.
 - A. Cézanne was born in Aix-en-Provence. His father was a banker who owned the largest, most historically significant house in the area, called the Jas de Bouffan. As a nouveau-riche father, he wanted his son to enter an exalted profession and insisted he study law.
 - B. Cézanne did so, for two years, but was already interested in art and studied at the local drawing academy. His closest boyhood friend was Emile Zola, the future famous novelist, who had already moved to Paris and urged Cézanne to follow. In 1861, Cézanne’s father finally permitted him to go to Paris, where he enrolled at the Atelier Suisse.

- C. As a Provençal, Cézanne was an outsider, with a thick accent and a rough manner. It is not surprising that in spite of studying and working in Paris, he was to spend the greater part of his life in Provence, exploring his own ideas and following his own intense vision.
- D. We see Cézanne's *Trees and Houses* (c. 1885), probably painted in the neighborhood of the Jas de Bouffan ("habitation of the winds").
1. This handsome and ambitious picture is among several similar paintings done at or near Cézanne's home.
 2. The screen of trees, a pictorial device explored here, had been used by other landscape painters, most recently Pissarro and Corot. It is painted across the foreground and serves to organize the picture.
- E. As mentioned earlier, Pissarro and Cézanne had worked closely in the early 1870s. We see here *Red Roofs* (1877), painted by Pissarro during this period. It is particularly beautiful for the whites and warm reds of the houses and the elaborate, skillfully designed skein of tree limbs, like tapestry threads, that organize the surface of the picture.
- V. Here we turn for a comparison to Camille Corot (1796–1875), a great independent landscape artist whose working life spanned the period from the beginnings of Delacroix to the birth of Impressionism.
- A. Corot also painted numerous scenes with trees in the foreground, such as *The Bridge at Mantes* (c. 1868–1870).
- B. Corot painted oil sketches in the open air a great deal. *Plein-air* ("open-air") painting was common enough before the Impressionists, but earlier painters were just sketching, not producing finished paintings outdoors. Such artists preferred to paint under controlled conditions, and they saw lighting as an artistic device, not a *subject*.
1. Painting larger, finished works out-of-doors, especially paintings intended to catch the effects of light and weather, would not have been practical before the invention of the paint tube in the 1840s.
 2. Of course, painting outdoors meant carrying a heavy load. It was hard work, as we can see in Daumier's humorous lithograph *Landscape Painters at Work* (1862).
- C. Cézanne also painted out-of-doors, often walking many miles daily to a particular site that he wanted to record. We see here as an example, his *Mont Sainte-Victoire and the Viaduct of the Arc River Valley* (c. 1885).
1. Mont St.-Victoire preoccupied Cézanne throughout his years in Aix-en-Provence. This limestone ridge is not at all impressive by Alpine standards, but it so dominates the low landscape of Provence that it is noble and commanding.
 2. Cézanne had grown up with the mountain, and he studied it as Monet studied his waterlily garden. He saw it as a living presence, always the same, yet always changing as he changed his point of view, or focused on some particular aspect of it, or analyzed its structure, contours, volumes, or colors.
3. In this painting, we see that Cézanne has pushed the mountain to the left, now secondary to the Arc Valley in front of it. The artist painted the valley with measured strokes of carefully gauged color. Our eye steps slowly into the painting with the strokes and blocks of color, then flows more continuously with the curving road.
 4. The small arches of the viaduct in the distance are not merely a record of this landscape feature but an essential part of the painting's structure, because they intersect with the daringly placed pine tree that vertically bisects the canvas.
 5. The pine tree is too close to the front of the picture to be its focus; it causes our eyes to shift from side to side. The right side of the painting is more open, with a broader expanse of valley, foothills, and sky. The secure horizontal of the viaduct subdivides this side into two equal parts; its line continues more subtly into the left side. The left side is much denser, with the compact stand of pine trees at the edge merging with the mountain. Such a description makes the painting sound almost geometric, but although it has a mathematical constituent, it is not rigid but compellingly organic.
 6. Having established his deep space, Cézanne then took care to reconnect the illusionistic distance with the picture surface. For example, the branches on the upper left side of the center tree nestle into the contour of the mountain, picking up its rhythm, while the branch halfway down the left side seems to be floating in space. Cézanne has released it from the tree and allowed it to float like a green cloud, so that it, too, mediates between near and far.
 7. The corresponding branch on the right side seems to meander down to the valley floor, where it deposits its leaves among the fields. Such inventions are the hallmark of Cézanne and are about *picture-making*, not mere representation of the land.
- D. Another site near Aix painted by Cézanne was the *Quarry at Bibémus* (c. 1895). This abstract composition is complex and sorts itself out only as we follow the faceted planes of the stone walls and allow our eyes to step among the green accents of trees and bushes up to the top of the painting, capped by a sliver of sky.
- E. Many people value Cézanne, like Chardin in the preceding century, for his still life paintings above all else. And by common consent, *Still-Life with Apples and Oranges* (c. 1895–1900) is among the greatest.
1. Cézanne's fruits and other objects do not obey the laws of physics or gravity; they obey the higher law of painting. This incisive composition, in which the richly patterned tapestry is balanced by the plowshare of the white tablecloth, is the field on which his

fruits are disposed, their vibrating contours not necessarily adhering to their bodies.

2. The fruits are anything but “still”; they are in motion like electrons, and they orbit around a nucleus—a single apple, more firmly modeled than the others. Cézanne placed this apple at the precise center of this monumental but otherwise asymmetrical painting.

F. Cézanne also plays symmetry against asymmetry in *Woman with a Coffee Pot* (c. 1890–1894).

1. To come face to face with this solemn servant, whose body presses toward the picture plane like some of the late figures of Rembrandt, is to feel an immutable physical presence. More than that, she possesses a somber and indomitable spirit that would be appropriate for an honored statesman.
2. The housekeeper is placed off center, but her body is symmetrical; the door behind her has its own symmetry, and the little group of the coffee pot and cup and saucer with spoon inhabit the right side of the picture with equal symmetry. The straight side of the coffeepot is marked with a heavy, dark line, and the cup and saucer hover rather near the table’s edge, while the spoon emerges from the cup with authority.
3. Note, too, that the uprightness of these objects is countered elsewhere by a calculated leaning of otherwise upright objects—the door, the housekeeper. A certain cushioning of the authoritative composition is provided by the large, vaguely painted flowers on the wall covering, which seem to float quietly toward the floor.

G. Such rigorousness sometimes leads people to overlook the emotional side of Cézanne, to forget that this artist is also a lyrical painter and a splendid colorist and that his treatment of people, of the human figure, can be sympathetic and empathetic. We see this side of the artist in *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* (1890–1892).

1. The artist’s love for his wife is obvious in the handling of the paint, the slight smudges around her lips, the liquid depth of her eyes, the inclination of her head.
2. The shadows behind her head seem both to support and animate it.

H. Cézanne’s paintings are notoriously difficult to date, but we can date *Lac d’Annecy* (1896) because we know that Cézanne traveled to this location only once, on vacation. This painting is a luscious blue, deep as a Monet water painting, but a different sort of blue, one that seems to step out of Venetian painting. The work is superbly organized, and the activity and the reflections of light are exciting, but the profound pull of this consoling blue is its claim to a permanent place in our memory.

I. About a month before his death, Cézanne wrote to the painter Emile Bernard, “I am continually making observations from nature, and I feel that I am making some slight progress.” That humility before nature is

what drove Cézanne, and his *slight* progress drove much of the art of the century that began soon after he died.

Works Discussed:

Pierre-Auguste Renoir:

Luncheon of the Boating Party, 1881, oil on canvas, 4' 3" x 5' 8" (129.5 x 172.7 cm), The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., USA.

Camille Pissarro:

L’île Lacroix, Effect of Fog at Rouen, 1888, oil on canvas, 18 3/8 x 22" (45.7 x 55.8 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Red Roofs, 1877, oil on canvas, 21 1/2 x 25 3/4" (54.5 x 65.6 cm), Musée d’Orsay, Paris, France.

Paul Cézanne:

Trees and Houses, c. 1885, oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 29" (54 x 73 cm), Musée de l’Orangerie, Paris, France.

Mont Sainte-Victoire and the Viaduct of the Arc River Valley, c. 1885, oil on canvas, 25 3/4 x 32 1/8" (65.4 x 81.6 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Quarry at Bibémus, c. 1895, oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 32" (64.7 x 81.2 cm), Folkwang Museum, Essen, Germany.

Still-Life with Apples and Oranges, c. 1895–1900, oil on canvas, 29 1/8 x 36 5/8" (74 x 93 cm), Musée d’Orsay, Paris, France.

Woman with a Coffee Pot, c. 1890–94, oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 38" (130.5 x 96.5 cm), Musée d’Orsay, Paris, France.

Portrait of Madame Cézanne, 1890–92, oil on canvas, 24 3/8 x 20 1/8" (62 x 51 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Lac d’Annecy, 1896, oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 32" (65 x 81 cm), Courtauld Institute Galleries, London, Great Britain.

Camille Corot:

The Bridge at Mantes, c. 1868–70, oil on canvas, 15 1/4 x 21 3/4" (38.5 x 55.5 cm), Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Further Reading:

Francesca Castellani, *Renoir: His Life and Works*.

Meyer Schapiro, *Cézanne*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What qualities differentiate *plein-air* painting from studio work?
2. Compare Chardin’s *Still Life with Plums* to Cézanne’s *Still-Life with Apples and Oranges*.

Lecture Forty-Five

Beyond Impressionism—From Seurat to Matisse

Scope: This lecture covers art that is classified as *Post-Impressionism* and *Fauvism*. The artists Georges Seurat, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent Van Gogh paved the way for 20th-century painting, and Henri Matisse serves as the bridge between 19th- and 20th-century art. As we look at these artists, we'll see the move toward expressing the increasingly personal world of the artist and away from a sense of shared meaning between the artist and the viewer.

Outline

- I. In my view, the term *Impressionism* is imprecise and, in fact, misleading, because people have become so interested in its supposed characteristics that they are sometimes confused by actual works of Impressionist art. Equally misleading is the term *Post-Impressionism*, used to differentiate such artists as Cézanne, Gauguin, and Seurat from Monet, Renoir, and Degas. All three of the former artists, however, exhibited with the Impressionists and all three were outlived by the latter.
- II. Georges Seurat (1859–1891) was born in Paris, studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and spent hours at the Louvre.
 - A. This path was all part of normal preparation for painting, but Seurat's means of preparing was not. No work of his seems to be without preparatory drawings, and for his large, imposing paintings, he did dozens of drawings and many small oil sketches before starting the larger work.
 - B. Of course, we must look at *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grande Jatte* (1884–1886).
 1. Seurat is usually called a Post-Impressionist, but at the time, his work was called *Neo-Impressionism*, and the technique with which it was painted was called *Pointillism*.
 2. The practice was to apply dots of pure color with the tip of the small brush. The theory was simply that if complementary colors laid side by side produced a vibrant effect while allowing the colors to mix in the eye, as Impressionist theory held, then using smaller strokes and subdividing the colors still further should increase the vibrancy and the effect of natural outdoor sunlight.
 3. Starting at the right of the painting, we see the dominant couple, she with a parasol and both of them with pets. As we move across to the left, we see a group of three figures who seem unrelated.
 4. There is a gentleman with a top hat and a cane, perhaps a clerk. Behind him is a woman doing needlework. Reclining in front of these figures is, unmistakably, a workman, smoking a pipe and wearing a sleeveless shirt; he is dominant in the painting and is given quite specific features.
 5. Seurat has set up a perspective system in the traditional sense of linear perspective, but he contradicts it by using a very high horizon line and dense trees that obstruct the movement into space.
 6. The painting has many interesting figures, such as the tall, columnar woman with a parasol who walks directly toward us from the center. To the left is a nursemaid, seen from behind; a bulky figure with a turban, she is almost an abstraction. She is reminiscent of a figure by the head of Christ in Giotto's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*.
 7. We also see a woman fishing and many pleasure boats on the water. Seurat shows us two steam-powered boats, which are a mechanized intrusion into the scene.
- C. Looking at this picture, most viewers are struck by the solemnity of the figures and their lack of movement. It can be compared with Piero della Francesca's Arezzo frescoes of the *Adoration of the Holy Wood* and *Meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* (1455–1456).
 1. It has often been observed that Seurat's nearly immobile figures in the *Grande Jatte* resemble those of Piero in their stoic dignity and hints of otherworldliness. In fact, the chapel at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, where Seurat studied, had copies of two of Piero's frescoes.
 2. It is not just Piero, however, but the entire Italian tradition, from Giotto to Masaccio to Piero, that Seurat has revisited. From this tradition, Seurat drew order and solidity for his painting.
- D. Like other Parisian painters of the last third of the 19th century who drew on Renaissance and Classical traditions, Seurat was applying their lessons to modern subject matter.
 1. Looking again at the *Grande Jatte*, we see that it suggests arrested time, a world held perpetually in abeyance, a sense that was enhanced by the Pointillist technique. Because the paint dots have no direction, they have no movement, and they contribute to the stasis of the painting.
 2. Note that this is the opposite of the momentary effect of motion and light that was the aim of some of the Impressionists.
- E. Seurat also painted a border, like the mat on a print, in the same Pointillist technique; the colors in the border are darker than, but related to, the colors to which they are adjacent. The painting was then finished with a pure white wooden frame.
- F. Seurat was an anarchist, and we can certainly read social commentary in this painting, yet we cannot pin it down specifically.

III. Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) was born in Paris but spent part of his childhood in Peru and six years as a sailor, which helps to explain his later life.

A. Gauguin was a Sunday painter and stockbroker who, learning his craft from the Impressionist paintings he collected, was invited by Pissarro to show with them. He exhibited with the Impressionists five times between 1879 and 1886 but was considered an amateur by some members of the group.

B. We see *The Yellow Christ* (1889).

1. Gauguin gave up his job in 1883 and, in 1886, went to Brittany, where he lived in poverty at Pont-Aven and Le Pouldu until 1890. This painting was inspired by a wooden crucifix that is still in the chapel near Pont-Aven where the artist saw it.
2. Gauguin enlarged the crucifix to life size and placed it in a Breton meadow, where pious women kneel in prayer and contemplation. The image is ambiguous, because it has the size of a real cross, but the yellow body of Christ is unreal.
3. On the other hand, Gauguin uses the same intense yellow, interspersed with an equally intense and unnatural red, in the landscape. The scene is not treated as a vision and, in the final analysis, was probably inspired both by the small cross he saw and by the larger cavalries—stone crucifixion groups—that are found beside many Breton churches.

C. Gauguin sailed from Marseilles to Tahiti in 1891, returned to Paris in 1893, and went back to Tahiti in 1895, spending the rest of his life there. His health was ruined, but he continued to paint until his death. From this later period, we see the *Day of the God* (1894).

1. Astonishingly, this masterpiece of the South Seas was painted in Paris! A wooden idol is at the back center, and women approach it. Women are bathing and sleeping in the foreground. In the distance, we see the seashore and the surf.
2. Exquisitely beautiful in color and pattern, the painting suggests a mythic Arcadia, one that has echoes in earlier art and that anticipates and surely influenced the Arcadian paintings of Henri Matisse 10 years later.

IV. Vincent Van Gogh (1853–1890) was born in the Netherlands, the son of a pastor. As a young man, he was quite uncertain of his direction.

A. He jumped from job to job as a young man before finally turning to art, with the support of his brother, Theo, when he was 27 years old. Through his brother, Van Gogh discovered that he could use drawing as a means of recovering his mental balance. He spent some months working in a painter's studio in Brussels and may have attended classes at the Academy.

B. In 1881, Van Gogh moved to Etten to live with his parents. There he taught himself perspective, anatomy, and physiognomy. Only six years later, he was accomplished enough to paint his *Self-Portrait as an Artist* (1887–1888). This was not the artist's first self-portrait, but it is the first in which he shows himself as a self-confident painter, palette in hand, and with all the colors of the painting carefully included on the palette.

C. Next, we turn to *The Harvest* (1888), which first was worked out carefully in a pen and watercolor drawing. In letters to his brother, Van Gogh described the colors of the painting in great detail.

D. Our next example is *The Red Vineyard* (1888).

1. Again, the artist described the scene in a letter to Theo. Van Gogh looked at nature as intensely as Cézanne did but filtered it through a different psyche, a personality so tenuously balanced on the brink that the painting seems to have been created in a rush of emotion.
2. Yet Van Gogh also controls the painting as carefully as he describes the scene, so that the wine-warm colors; the fluid, improvisatory brushwork; the expansive sweep of space; and the animation of the small figures in the vineyard all coalesce.

E. Of course, we must look at *The Starry Night* (1889), a painting that is majestic, Expressionistic, and unexpected.

1. This painting is often cited as one of the most important precursors of German and Nordic Expressionism, but as at least one historian has observed, it is "more powerful and imaginative than anything in later Expressionistic art, which proceeded from a similar emotionally charged vision of nature."
2. The paintings of these months are full of passion and turmoil, although only *The Starry Night* pushes these emotions to the extreme. In this case, the extreme is *abstraction*, not in the 20th-century sense, but in the sense of painting the natural world *from memory and imagination*, rather than face to face.

F. In a letter to Emile Bernard, six months later, at the beginning of December 1889, Van Gogh wrote, "...And yet, once again, I let myself go reaching for stars that are too big—a new failure—and I have had enough of it." He died in Auvers-sur-Oise in 1890, a suicide.

V. The painters whose work we have been looking at in the last few lectures prepared the way for the painters of the 20th century, to whom we will now turn our attention. We look at Henri Matisse (1868–1954) first, because he was already a mature artist when Gauguin and Cézanne died, and he consciously bridged the 19th and 20th centuries as he developed his art.

A. We see first *Portrait of Madame Matisse (The Green Line)* (1905).

1. The nickname for the painting came from its first owners and, of course, referred to the dark green stripe running vertically from the

hairline of Mme. Matisse to her upper lip and continuing in a haphazard way onto her chin and neck, not to mention spilling over into the area surrounding her right eye.

2. The background is divided into three distinct zones of color—green, violet, and red-orange—and her hair is painted in blue and black. It is, of course, the abstract, expressive use of color that distinguishes the painting and that thoroughly upset many viewers of Matisse's work in 1904–1905.
 3. In discussing the work of Matisse, a critic made a reference to *fauves* ("wild beasts"), and the derogatory name has stuck for a century, though now it is an accolade.
 4. But why was the painting so startling? It should not have been unsettling or unexpected in light of the paintings of Gauguin or Van Gogh, because the abstract use of color had been announced by them in works of the preceding 15 years. As a portrait, *Mme Matisse* is dignified and restrained in every way *except* color.
- B.** We close this lecture with *Le Bonheur de Vivre* (*The Joy of Life*) (1905).
1. We see a wonderful pair of figures in the right-hand corner, literally united in love; only one head serves for both of them.
 2. We also see a figure reclining in the foreground playing pan pipes, a figure plucking at the grass, and one standing with arms raised, almost like wings. In the middle background is a group engaged in a circle dance.
 3. Note the beautiful trees that vary in color, showing every possible delicate tone in the palette.
 4. This sylvan glade with its pastoral nymphs, fauns, lovers, and dancers delights the eye—as long as we don't expect reality.
 5. We can, however, understand the painting Classically. The correct translation of the title in English is "*Good Hour of Life*," which is a Classical reference to the Golden Age of Man, before the disruptive strife of industry and warfare supplanted the pastoral, agricultural "Eden." This Golden Age was the subject of many paintings and poems in the Renaissance and Baroque eras, especially in Venetian art, and was the basic reference point for Matisse.
 6. This is a masterpiece of early-20th-century color painting in France, and its impact was enormous. Matisse himself would follow his own lead, as we shall see in the next lecture, but other painters, French and non-French, would also find it irresistible and inspiring. Unfortunately, World War I destroyed Arcadia, and the new Golden Age that many artists, writers, and musicians had ardently hoped was dawning disappeared in the trenches.

Works Discussed:

Georges Seurat:

Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grande Jatte, 1884–86, oil on canvas, 6' 10" x 10' 1¼" (207.6 x 308 cm), The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Paul Gauguin:

The Yellow Christ, 1889, oil on canvas, 36 ¼ x 28 ¾" (92 x 73 cm), Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York, USA.

Day of the God (Mahana no Atua), 1894, oil on canvas, 27 x 36" (68.3 x 91.5 cm), Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Vincent van Gogh:

Self-Portrait as an Artist, 1887–88, oil on canvas, 25 ¾ x 20" (65.4 x 50.8 cm), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

The Harvest, 1888, oil on canvas, 28 ¾ x 36 ¼" (73 x 92 cm), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

The Red Vineyard, 1888, oil on canvas, 28 ¾ x 36" (73 x 91 cm), The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russia.

The Starry Night, 1889, oil on canvas, 29 x 36 ¼" (73.7 x 92.1 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Henri Matisse:

Portrait of Madame Matisse (The Green Line), 1905, oil on canvas, 16 x 12 ¾" (40.6 x 32.3 cm), Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Le Bonheur de Vivre (The Joy of Life), 1905, 5' 8 ½" x 7' 9 ¾" (7.14 x 2.38 cm), Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania, USA.

Further Reading:

Robert L. Herbert and Neil Harris (contributor), *Seurat and the Making of La Grande Jatte*.

Hilary Spurling, *The Unknown Matisse: A Life of Henri Matisse: The Early Years, 1869–1908* and *Matisse the Master: A Life of Henri Matisse: The Conquest of Colour: 1909–1954*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is your interpretation of the social commentary offered by Seurat in *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grande Jatte*?
2. Using a painting by Matisse that we have not seen in this lecture, describe the artist's abstract use of color.

Lecture Forty-Six

Cubism and Early Modern Painting

Scope: This lecture covers a span of about 20 years at the beginning of the 20th century and is primarily about the innovations and achievements of Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse in that critical period of their development. In a period rich in artistic exploration and diverse discoveries, it remains true that these two men produced some of their finest paintings during these years and had a greater immediate influence on art than most others.

Outline

- I. Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was born in Malaga on the south coast of Spain, the son of an art teacher. He was remarkably precocious, mastering the Realistic style of painting that his father taught and that was dominant in Spain at the time.
 - A. The family had settled in Barcelona, however, and the currents of new art flowing from France and northern Europe soon reached that cosmopolitan city. Picasso began experimenting with ideas found in the art of Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec, and the Norwegian Expressionist Edvard Munch, among others.
 - B. He was also quite naturally open to the Spanish culture in which he grew up. The Iberian peninsula had a prehistoric art of stone carvings that Picasso was aware of, and it had the imposing example of the golden age of Spanish art that we have already studied.
 - C. Our first example is *The Old Guitarist* (1903/1904), which Picasso painted in Barcelona before he settled permanently in Paris.
 1. The elongated and angular body has parallels in paintings by El Greco. Picasso accentuates the distortions by squeezing the body into a narrow space and further stresses the profound melancholy and despair of the picture with the pervasive blue, the color chosen, of course, for its evocation of sorrow.
 2. There is elegance and life in the guitarist's hands, which together with the curves of the warmer brown guitar, give needed contrast to the rest of the painting.
 3. The perceived connection to El Greco and the Mannerist style of the 16th century has sometimes led writers to call paintings of the *Blue Period* "Mannerist" pictures. After the 17th century, El Greco's reputation had faded, even in Spain, but in the late 19th century, there was a revival of interest in him. The art of El Greco, like the later art of Goya, was to become an important source for many Expressionistic painters of the early 20th century.
- D. Our next example is *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)* (1907).
 1. The title of this painting was a private joke. There was a notorious brothel on Avignon Street in Barcelona, and the subject here is a brothel. Picasso later said that he disliked the title.
 2. In May or June 1907, Picasso had a "revelation" about African sculpture during a visit to the Trocadero ethnographic museum in Paris. Matisse had already begun to collect such sculpture, but Picasso had not paid much attention to it. After his revelation, he repainted the *Femmes d'Alger* with the African mask-influenced faces of the figures on the right.
 3. The painting was much more explicit in its first state. It included a sailor in port who was visiting the brothel and examining the "merchandise." That figure was soon removed, which at once made the painting less explicit and more ambiguous.
 4. The angles from *The Old Guitarist* are reintroduced here in a different tonality and with a different subject. Note the angularity of the arms, breasts, and torsos of these figures, as well as the background. The spaces between the figures suggest broken glass.
 5. The *Femmes d'Alger* is most indebted to the bather compositions of Cézanne, one of which we see here for comparison, *Four Bathers* (1888–1890). Picasso had unquestionably seen some of these paintings before 1907 and, from their alien presence, distilled his own strong brew.
 6. Note the central nude with her arms raised in Cézanne's painting and the similar pose of the central figure in *Femmes d'Alger*.
 7. Picasso understood not just the compositional and structural ideas of Cézanne's pictures but their emotional and psychological core. Cézanne's paintings are not superficial, not just about finding the right color or shape or line, but about uncovering and reproducing in paint the essential, organic relationships in nature, and he did it stroke by stroke, while simultaneously trying to bring every part of the picture to the same degree of completion. This is why so many Cézannes seem to be still in progress while nonetheless satisfying us with the overall resolution that he has achieved.
 8. We see this quality in one of Cézanne's many paintings of *Mont-Saint-Victoire* (1904–1906). Note the insistent structure in this painting, every brushstroke counterbalancing another, every part of the painting brought to the same degree of completion. Late work by Cézanne shows the road to Cubism, the dissecting and reshaping of objects with the artist's scalpel, which is his brush.
- E. Looking at our next example, *Factory at Horta de Ebro* (1909), it seems as if Picasso began from Cézanne but painted the subject with a more consistent and geometricizing approach.

1. Obviously, the buildings gave him the cue for the strongly faceted structure, but he chose the *motif*, to use Cézanne's word, and knew what he was looking for.
 2. Note the buildings and the complex courtyard in the background, with a smokestack beyond it. Even the trees seem to spring from cylindrical bases.
 3. The limited palette—sandy browns and tans, dark and light greens with white highlights—is typical of Picasso when he is exploring a new idea. Once it was unrelenting blue; now in the years of Cubist exploration, it is increasingly monochrome again, but toward browns and greys with only occasional touches of bright color.
- II. Picasso and Georges Braque evolved the new style of Cubism during the period 1907–1912, with their closest contact occurring from 1909–1911.
- A. Perhaps no truly revolutionary style has ever been developed in such a short period of time as Cubism. Fauvism was also the work of a few men in a brief period, but it was not as revolutionary because it was another in the periodic assertions of the primacy of color in art. Fauvism used color more abstractly, a development from Gauguin and Van Gogh. Cubism developed from Cézanne, but it is a more focused, intensive effort, quasi-scientific in its analytical rigor.
 - B. We'll look at a few important examples of full Cubism, starting with Picasso's *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard* (1910).
 1. This is a great and somber portrait, and those who claim that they cannot recognize the subject in a Cubist painting cannot say the same about this painting.
 2. The features are there; the intellect is there; note the powerful forehead and the top of the head, above the eyes. That his eyes are either closed or looking downward emphasizes both the rational mind and the insight of Vollard.
 - C. The essential logic of Cubism seems to flow from all of Picasso's earlier works. They may seem initially to be different moments, or "periods," of his work, but they are coherent, even inevitable.
 - D. Next, we see Picasso's *Still Life with Chair-Caning* (1912). This was Picasso's first collage, made by gluing a piece of oilcloth printed with a caning pattern onto the painted surface, then partly painting over it with bold brushstrokes.
 1. The painted goblet and sliced lemon are fragmented; part of the word *Journal* is painted boldly; a painted pipe stem (over the *u* in *Journal*) seems to stick out of the picture.
 2. The pipe stem and the oilcloth force us to ask, "What is painted; what is real?" We become part of a debate between aesthetics and metaphysics.

3. This collage also represents the first time Picasso introduced an illusionistic element—*trompe l'oeil*—into his art.
 4. Finally, the work is framed with a piece of rope. This is the first collage of the 20th century, and Picasso knew that it was a seminal work; for this reason, he kept it in his private collection.
- E. We now turn to Georges Braque, looking at his *Table with Pipe* (1914).
1. As mentioned earlier, Braque and Picasso had developed Cubism simultaneously and with full awareness of each other's work. This Braque is later, but all the innovative ideas of Cubism are strongly asserted here, although composed with a greater sense of ease.
 2. Each object is shown with multiple points of view but more directly. The die, for instance, is *unfolded* to show two sides; essentially it is flattened onto the picture plane. At the same time, there is a definite sense of recession.
 3. In this painting, as in Picasso's portrait of Vollard, we are struck by the extreme subtlety of modeling—real modeling in the traditional sense of a gradation from light to shadow—as well as by the alternating opacity and transparency of the planes.
 4. The pictorial structure is secure and convincing. Technically, some of the shapes are built up of sand and some of gesso, and the painting is covered with Pointillist dots of blue paint. The result is a varied and rich surface. Throughout his career, Braque often used sand and other materials in his paintings.
- III. At the same time, Matisse had been working through his own dialogue with the art of Picasso, not in collaboration, but in response to the Picassos he saw on exhibition or in private collections, including Gertrude Stein's.
- A. We see first Matisse's *Harmony in Red* (*The Tablecloth*) (1908–1909).
 1. This painting was commissioned by a Russian merchant living in Paris, Sergei Shchukin, for his dining room in the Trubetskoi Palace, Moscow. When Matisse painted this, he had just moved to a larger studio in the Hotel Biron, where Rodin also lived. There he began to paint on a more monumental scale.
 2. As we run our eyes over this large painting, we find delight in the decorative beauty, as well as the large, assertive shapes: the decanters, the fruit stand, the arabesque patterns on the wall and tablecloth design, the window, the chair, and the table edge.
 3. The title calls attention to the extraordinary red in this painting, which is difficult to reproduce in photographs. In fact, the red is the result of two earlier paintings—a *Harmony in Green* and a *Harmony in Blue*—which lie *underneath* the surface of this painting!
 4. Matisse's work for Shchukin's mansion led him to create daring masterpieces of space and anti-space, canvases as flat as Picasso's yet both airy and open and vibrant in color.

- B. Our next example is *The Piano Lesson* (1916), also by Matisse but quite different from the preceding example.
1. The composition is rectilinear and is, in part, dictated by the metronome on the piano. The shape of this object is repeated in other shapes in the painting, such as the small shadow on the boy's face and the abstract green form in the background.
 2. Notice in the lower left corner Matisse's own bronze or clay model of a seated female figure; the brand name of the piano, Pleyel; and the painting on the wall on the right side.
 3. This painting has been called "an artist's monologue." Did the mood in France during the war have an effect on Matisse that is reflected in this somber painting?
- IV. Picasso had begun to develop his so-called "Neoclassical" style around 1917–1918, and it reached its apogee in this great figure grouping, *Three Women at the Spring* (1921).
- A. This painting is completely unsentimental and not picturesque either—not about femininity and not about some childhood memory of Spanish women gathered at a spring.
 - B. Instead, the painting is heroic, and it ultimately developed from *Les Femmes d'Alger*, with many steps along the way. The weight—not just physical but psychological and emotional—is tremendous, and one comes away from the painting with a sense of having witnessed something important.
 - C. This is the same feeling one experiences with Manet's *Bar at the Folies-Bergères* and Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grande Jatte*, and as with these works, we are left with a profound impression, but no storyline to support it.
 - D. As I said of Manet's works in general, we have left the world of *shared meaning* behind in modern art and must now confront and deal with the *semiprivate* world of the artist. I use the term *semiprivate*, because there are many hints in all these paintings of the artist's concerns, but the work is not literal, and those who insist that pictures tell them a story will be frustrated, puzzled, and unhappy with these paintings.
 - E. To refuse to join in the artist's enterprise—which in great art is always to communicate something that the artist finds compelling—is to lock oneself out of an experience that is life-enhancing. I generally believe that when an artist says something new, or in a new way, and I don't understand it, the problem is mine. It is up to me to work at understanding what the artist is trying to do.
 - F. Perhaps Picasso can sum up my feelings in this regard. Here he is, in 1923, speaking on Cubism, "The fact that for a long time cubism has not been understood and that even today there are people who cannot see anything in it, means nothing. I do not read English; an English

book is a blank book to me. This does not mean that the English language does not exist, and why should I blame anybody else but myself if I cannot understand what I know nothing about?"

Works Discussed:

Pablo Picasso:

The Old Guitarist, 1903/04, oil on panel, 48 ½ x 32 ½" (122.9 x 82.6 cm), The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Les Femmes d'Alger, 1907, oil on canvas, 8' x 7' 8" (243.9 x 233.7 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Factory at Horta de Ebro, 1909, oil on canvas, 20 x 23 ¾" (50.7 x 60.2 cm), The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Portrait of Ambroise Vollard, 1910, oil on canvas, 36 ¼ x 25 5/8" (92 x 65 cm), The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russia.

Still Life with Chair-Caning, 1912, collage of oil, oilcloth, and pasted paper on canvas, 10 ¾ x 13 ¾" (26.7 x 35 cm), Musée Picasso, Paris, France.

Three Women at the Spring, 1921, oil on canvas, 6' 8 ¼" x 5' 8 ½" (203.9 x 174 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Paul Cézanne:

Four Bathers, 1888–90, oil on canvas, 28 ¾ x 36 ¼" (73 x 92 cm), New Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Mont-Saint-Victoire, 1904–06, oil on canvas, 27 ½ x 35 ¼" (69.8 x 89.5 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Georges Braque:

Table with Pipe, 1914, oil with sand and gesso on canvas, 15 x 18" (38 x 45.7 cm), National Museum of Modern Art, Pompidou Center, Paris, France.

Henri Matisse:

Harmony in Red (The Tablecloth), 1908–09, oil on canvas, 5' 10" x 7' 2" (180 x 221 cm), The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

The Piano Lesson, 1916, oil on canvas, 8' ½" x 6' 11 ¾" (245.1 x 212.7 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Further Reading:

Brigitte Leal, Christine Piot, Marie-Laure Bernadac, and Jean Leymarie, *The Ultimate Picasso*.

Karen Wilkin, *Georges Braque*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the elements of Cubism seen in Braque's *Table with Pipe*.
2. What is your personal response to Cubism?

Lecture Forty-Seven

Modern Sculpture—Rodin and Brancusi

Scope: This lecture is devoted to the sculpture of Auguste Rodin, Constantin Brancusi, and Naum Gabo. In these sculptors, we see three possibilities offered to artists in the 20th century: Expressionism, Idealism, and Constructivism. We also see the beginnings of the rapid spread of modern art from its center in Paris across Europe.

Outline

- I. Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) began work as a stone mason and traveled to Brussels in 1871 to work on decorative sculpture for the new Stock Exchange. A lifelong study of Michelangelo combined with his love of French history and literature to give him the desire and the ideas to produce some of the most famous works in French sculpture.
 - A. When Rodin died, his fame was at its height, but the world had changed. In art, the late Romantic Expressionism personified in sculpture by Rodin gave way to Modernism. We should not forget, however, that Rodin offered one of the major alternatives for modern sculpture, because his Expressive style was never abandoned, even when the Idealism of Brancusi (and Mondrian in painting) with its pure, svelte, pared-down minimalism, was most influential.
 - B. We see first Rodin's *Man with a Broken Nose* (1863–1864), a probable homage to Michelangelo, whose work was a continual inspiration to Rodin. Note the expressive modeling. Rodin began with a complete understanding of anatomy, of the structure beneath the skin, then altered it for his own expressive reasons.
 - C. In 1875, Rodin went to Italy and, soon after his return, began work on *The Age of Bronze* (1877).
 1. The piece is striking in its precise Naturalism; indeed, one critic accused the artist of having made a cast from the model's body. Rodin was furious and never again made a life-size figure—his later figures were larger than life size or considerably smaller.
 2. The pose derives from Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*; the evidence is the raised right arm. In Rodin's sculpture, the model was probably held a pole in his left hand as an aid to posing. When the pole was removed before casting, it gave the hand an expressive ambiguity.
 - D. The most important work, or nexus of many works, in Rodin's career is *The Gates of Hell* (1880–1887), which began as a commission for the doors for a projected Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris. Rodin never finished a definitive model for the commission, and the decision was made *not* to build the new museum but to install Rodin's sculpture in a wing of the Louvre, where it remains.
 1. The concept of the *Gates* evolved slowly. In the end, it was never completed in any formal sense, nor was it ever cast in Rodin's lifetime. Instead, the *Gates* became the fountainhead of Rodin's art. The work is filled with figures inspired by Dante's *Inferno*.
 2. Looking at a full view of the *Gates*, we see the two sides of the doors, the overdoor above the lintel, and a broad capstone with three standing figures. The door as a whole is flanked by pilasters.
 3. The three figures at the top are known as the Fates. They seem to be pointing relentlessly downward. Just below them and below the top lintel is a famous seated figure. It is known to us as *The Thinker*, but on the doors, it is Dante, presiding over his *Inferno*.
 4. To compare, we see a version of *The Thinker* (n.d.), which was removed from the door and cast and carved in various sizes. The modeling of the figure on the doors was done in 1880 and was 27 inches high. The figure was enlarged around 1902–1904. We are not certain when the bronze cast of the enlarged figure was made.
 5. The pose of *The Thinker* is complex and artificial, but it conveys intensity of thought.
 6. Returning to the figures of the Fates, we see that they appear to be three different male figures. However, they are actually the same figure repeated but in different positions.
 7. As a model for the composition of the *Gates*, Rodin used Ghiberti's Baptistery doors in Florence. Like those doors, these were subdivided into individual panels. Gradually, however, the "walls" between the panels broke down, allowing the space to flow through the whole valve. The figures also seem to float in this unconfined space. Even the background seems to be continuously in motion.
 8. In another detail of the doors, we see *Ugolino and his Children* and the same figures enlarged to more than life-size in a plaster sculpture at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. In Dante's *Inferno*, Count Ugolino was a traitor; he had been locked in a tower, together with his four sons, where they starved to death, one by one. The harrowing story is given form by Rodin, who cares little for Ugolino's crime and only for his cruel fate.
 9. The astounding, elemental truth of Rodin's re-creation of this episode has never been equaled, because he shrinks from nothing. The final line in Dante is often read to mean that Ugolino gave in to hunger and cannibalized his sons. That many 19th-century readers thought so is clear from various references, both literary and pictorial.
 - E. The first major public commission that Rodin competed for and won was a commemorative sculpture to honor the heroic medieval citizens of the city of Calais, on the coast of France on the English Channel,

who had offered to sacrifice themselves to save their city. The competition was announced in 1884. The commission was from the city of Calais and was to stand before the city hall. The result from Rodin was his *Burghers of Calais* (1884–1889).

1. From the *Chronicles* of Froissart, we learn the story of the siege of Calais by the English in the Hundred Years' War. The city had withstood a nearly year-long siege but capitulated in 1347, when six of its leading citizens surrendered themselves as hostages so the siege would be lifted and the citizens would be fed. These six citizens—the burghers—expected to be executed.
 2. Through the intervention of the French-born queen of Edward III, they were not, but what Rodin shows us is the expectation of death and the ways in which these six respond as they leave the city that they had saved. As demanded by the English, they have put on sackcloth and halters of rope, and one of them carries the keys to the city to deliver to the enemy.
 3. Our example shows the cast that belongs to Philadelphia's Rodin Museum. Looking at the front of the group, we see the stoicism of the burgher with the keys to the right, as well as the bent old man, embodying wisdom. This is the principal view of the sculpture, and it has an opening that seems meant for us.
 4. As we can see, the sculpture has a green *patina*. *Patina* originally meant the green or greenish-blue crust or film that forms on bronze or copper as it naturally oxidizes over a period of time. However, a patina can be induced by means of chemicals, and many sculptors, Rodin included, experimented with different-colored patinas, from black to silvery-gray to the more familiar shades of green.
 5. Looking at details of a cast in the Rodin Museum in Paris, we see figures in the back, including a young man with extended arms. His gesture echoes the expression on his face—incomprehension.
 6. Approaching the next corner, we see an erect figure on the right, the back of the old man whom we've seen from the front, and a tormented, despairing figure on the left, grasping his head in his hands.
 7. What I hope to convey, even in a few images of this incredibly complex group, is the cinematic quality that Rodin brings to it. How he conceptualized it, and every shifting view, seems to me a feat of the imagination unique in the history of sculpture.
- F. We now turn to *The Kiss* (1886). Originally part of *The Gates of Hell*, this piece was removed early on and became the artist's most popular independent work.

II. As we move on to Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957), compare Rodin's version of this subject with Brancusi's *The Kiss* (1916).

- A. Brancusi was born in Romania but worked in Paris from 1904. He is the pioneer abstract sculptor of the 20th century.
- B. Brancusi's *The Kiss* is witty, warm, and lovable. It carries as much conviction as Rodin's *Kiss* does, although it has left the ideal realm for the world of chunky humanity. One might say that they—the Rodin and the Brancusi—are equally distant from the real but equally persuasive and equally necessary.
- C. Our next sculpture is *Bird in Space* (*Yellow Bird*) (1923–1924).
 1. Just as Seurat and others had surrounded their pictures with frames painted white or other colors, disdaining the pseudo-French Rococo frames that dealers and wealthy clients preferred, so, too, did Brancusi control the presentation of his sculptural figures.
 2. Brancusi repeated the basic theme and form of the *Bird in Space* 17 times using different materials. This one was the first marble *Bird* in which the conical footing at the tapering bottom of the bird was carved from the same piece of marble as the body itself, although it was later broken and had to be repaired. The yellow marble gives this *Bird* a luxurious beauty.
 3. Another version of this theme is *Bird in Space* (1932–1940). The metal versions of the *Bird* have a more ethereal quality because of the highly reflective surface. Light striking the long convex shape tends to dissolve the contours into an unstable gleam, obscuring the perception of its absolute shape. This is analogous to Impressionist paintings in which the artist's intense concentration on capturing the effects of light on objects also had the result of fracturing the perceptible contour and, thus, the precise shape of the forms.
- D. Next, we see *Mlle. Pogany I* (1912–1913). This sculpture is meant to capture a purified, primitive essence. "Simplicity," wrote Brancusi, "is not an end in art, but one reaches simplicity in spite of oneself by approaching the real meanings of things."

III. As Brancusi had emulated the perfect finish of machine-made objects, so, too, Naum Gabo (1890–1977) and his brother Antoine Pevsner decided that art must accept the technology of the modern age and its materials. But their style, which they called *Constructivist*, was anti-materialistic.

- A. We see Gabo's *Constructed Head No. 2* (1916; enlarged version 1966).
- B. Gabo's first two constructed heads of 1915–1916 were made of small planes of wood or metal. These were positioned at right angles to what would be the natural surfaces of the head, revealing the interior as open, interpenetrating volumes of space—small, separate spaces defined by the edges of planes. This anatomy of the head was entirely impersonal—there is nothing of portraiture or likeness in these

abstractions. The enlargement of 1966, which we see in our example, was made in the interest of permanence as well as impact.

- C. Cubism is one source of this style, but it is Cubism opened up to admit space as an equal partner with mass. In this, it was influenced by the dynamic elements of Italian Futurism.
- D. Both the Cubists and the Constructivists spoke of *real time* as an element in their art, and Gabo tried making some kinetic art with moving parts but decided that it was distracting and that the movement and the passage of time had to be supplied instead by the moving eye scanning the art.
- E. Gabo and his brother were Russians who had spent some years in Germany and France before the Russian Revolution. They participated in the revolutionary artistic movements in Moscow before the revolution turned against many of the idealistic artists who had been among its supporters. Gabo left Russia in 1922 and went to Berlin, then England, finally settling in America after the Second World War.
- F. Compare Brancusi's *Mlle. Pogany* with Gabo's *Head*. Note the closed, idyllic quality of the Brancusi and the open, suave quality of the Gabo.
- G. Now make a three-way comparison among Rodin's *Man with Broken Nose* and the Brancusi and Gabo. We see three possibilities offered to the 20th century:
 - 1. The Expressionist modeling of Rodin, including its distortions and abstractions.
 - 2. The idealized elegance of Brancusi, including its distortions and abstractions.
 - 3. The Constructivist mask of Gabo, including its Cubistic planes and its peeling away of the natural surface to reveal the space within.
- H. Each of these has been the inspiration for sculptors in the 20th century and now in the 21st. They offer a wide range of stylistic approaches and potential.
- I. It is interesting and important to realize that suddenly, as we entered the 20th century, modern art seems to have spread rapidly across Europe. A short time before, Paris was the center of the modern movement, and Rodin had been part of that center. But Brancusi, although he moved to Paris, was Romanian and Gabo was Russian, and Rodin himself became an international art star.
 - 1. There was a moment, before the unexpected outbreak of World War I, when a cosmopolitan spirit was dominant in European culture, one that reached into Eastern Europe and Russia. The spirit and optimism disappeared with the war, but the internationalism continued, in part driven by the aftermath of the war.
 - 2. In our last lecture, we will look at European art immediately before and between the two great wars of the last century.

Works Discussed:

Auguste Rodin:

Man with a Broken Nose, c. 1870, bronze, 9 ½" H (24.1 cm H), Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA.

The Age of Bronze, 1877, bronze, 5' 11" H (180.34 cm H), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

The Gates of Hell, 1880–87, plaster, 18 x 12' (5.49 x 3.7 m), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

The Thinker, bronze, 79" H (200.66 cm H), Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyons, France.

Ugolino and his Children, 1880–87, plaster, 16 ¼" H (43 cm H), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France.

Burghers of Calais, 1884–89, bronze, 6' 10 ½" H (210.82 cm H), Rodin Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, and Musée Rodin, Paris, France.

The Kiss, 1886, marble, 34 ½" H (89 cm H), Musée Rodin, Paris, France.

Constantin Brancusi:

The Kiss, 1916, limestone, 23 x 13 ¼ x 10" (58.42 x 35 x 25.4 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Bird in Space (Yellow Bird), 1923–24, marble with marble, limestone, and oak base, 8' 7" H (261.62 cm H), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Bird in Space, 1932–40, polished brass, 5' H (151 cm H), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City, New York, USA.

Mlle. Pogany I, 1912–13, plaster, 17 ½" H (45.7 cm H), Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, France.

Naum Gabo:

Constructed Head No. 2, 1916/1966, Cor-ten steel painted grey, 5' 9 ½" H, (175.3 x 134 x 122.6 cm), Tate Gallery, London, Great Britain

Further Reading:

Raphael Masson, Veronique Mattiussi, Jacques Vilain, *Rodin*.

Radu Varia, *Brancusi*.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. How did *The Gates of Hell* serve as a wellspring for sculpture by Rodin?
- 2. Describe two versions of Brancusi's *Bird in Space* made in different materials.

Lecture Forty-Eight

Art between Two Wars—Kandinsky to Picasso

Scope: This last lecture includes Russian, Italian, Belgian, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Swiss artists, and it covers such styles or movements as German Expressionism, Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, and Neo-Plasticism. We will not attempt to define all these *isms* but will view a series of works of art that responded to, were conditioned by, or created by the events of the 20th century between the two world wars.

Outline

- I. We begin with Wassily Kandinsky (Russian, 1866–1944) and his *Improvisation No. 30 (Cannons)* (1913).
 - A. Kandinsky, working in Germany, produced some of the earliest abstractions of the century. A first glance at this work suggests that it is among them, and its title, *Improvisation No. 30*, seems to confirm that impression. But the subtitle—*Cannons*—which was probably not part of Kandinsky's original title, contradicts it. In fact, Kandinsky did not produce any pure abstractions before the war.
 - B. The cannons, in the lower right, discharge blue and red blasts of color, although there is a suggestion of shells, as well as a suggestion of architectural forms at the upper right.
- II. Our next artist is Marcel Duchamp (American, born in France, 1887–1968); we see his *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912).
 - A. Taking his initial cue from sequential, stop-motion photography that revealed how people and animals actually moved, Duchamp added the fragmentation of objects and the monochromatic palette found in Cubism and the study of motion from the Italian Futurists.
 - B. The title provoked the kind of consternation that Cubist titles often do when the thing described is not easily located. Where is the nude? We see only a figurative shape, repeated, overlapping, suggesting motion.
- III. Next, we see an example from Umberto Boccioni (Italian, 1882–1916), *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913).
 - A. The mechanistic or armored appearance of the figure is striking; it has the abstraction of a robot. We know that Boccioni started with the idea of doing a modern nude, but it is as wrapped in mechanistic abstraction as is Duchamp's *Nude*.
 - B. Seen from the side, the sculpture gives the impression that it is striding with forcefulness; a strong wind has forced back the clothing or

covering. Seen from in front, if the sculpture is placed at our level, it seems to rush irresistibly headlong toward us.

- IV. Next is Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (German, 1880–1938); we see his *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* (1915), painted when the artist was on garrison duty during World War I.
 - A. The painting is a grim fantasy of the possibility of dismemberment or amputation caused by war and, at the same time, a sexual fantasy of castration. Kirchner had not lost a hand, although in this picture, he is shown as having lost his right hand—his painting hand. Nor is he, as it at first appears, standing in front of a nude woman.
 - B. Instead, he is standing in front of a painting of a woman; the angle of the canvas can be seen at right. The ambiguity, however, is intentional and has a strong sexual component.
- V. When the war to end all wars ended, the tallying up of the physical and psychological toll began.
 - A. How was one to get on with life? The utter irrationality of mankind seemed to have been demonstrated. To some, the futility of the period could be expressed only by the absurd, and in art and literature arose a movement called *Dada*, named by Tristan Tzara in 1916, in response to that absurdity.
 - B. We see an example in Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917, replicated in 1964).
 1. As a member of an exhibition jury that had announced its intention to admit all art submitted, Duchamp anonymously entered this work. *Fountain*, of course, is a urinal without plumbing that has been removed from the lavatory, inverted, signed with a pseudonym, and dated. It was rejected by his fellow jurors, as Duchamp had expected, and he resigned from the jury in protest.
 2. Duchamp “found” an object, divorced it from its intended use, reordered it by repositioning it, and tried to place it in an exhibition where it could be seen “differently.” It is quite possible that if the object had been seen by someone who had never seen a urinal, it could have been seen objectively for its form and color, but as it was, its function was enough to condemn it as a proposed artwork.
 3. The concept of *found objects* incorporated into art or presented as art in their own right has been around for a century and is now generally accepted in the world of artists. Still, that statement dodges part of Duchamp's purpose, which was to invite absurdity into the art gallery.
 - C. From Dada, or partly from it, came *Surrealism*, meaning “above” or “beyond” Realism. Though Surrealist artists often used Realistic techniques, it was to express the irrational, such as the world of dreams. On the other hand, Surrealism might also utilize non-rational techniques, such as automatic writing or painting.

1. Much of Surrealism had a sexual content, because it was informed by the theories and explorations of Sigmund Freud.
 2. As an example, we see *The Menaced Assassin* (*L'assassin menacé*) (1926) by René Magritte (Belgian, 1898–1967).
 3. Magritte, whose deadpan Surrealism is exemplified by this painting, excelled in the combination of unexpected objects or the creation of unexplained tableaux.
 4. We see a succession of three spaces:
 - a. A room where a naked woman lies murdered on a daybed, while her presumed killer stands beside a Victrola and looks into its horn like the dog in the ads of yesteryear.
 - b. Three nearly identical male faces stare into the window at the body, with a mountain landscape behind them.
 - c. In the foreground, outside the entrance to the murder room, two men with bowler hats, one with a club and one with a net, wait to capture the killer.
 5. The painting is so peculiar that it is memorable. Who are the witnesses and what are they waiting for? For the record to end? For the man to exit? Where is this sparsely furnished apartment with the bare floor? It is all expressionless, without meaningful clues. It looks like a scene from a crime film or detective novel, but it doesn't *act* like one. It simply *is*. Why should we care about the questions it raises, given that no answers will be forthcoming?
- D. In complete contrast is this almost contemporary painting by Picasso, *The Dance* (1925).
1. We see three frantic dancers; one is doubled over at the left and seems to have a "hole" in the body, created by the space between the arm and the torso. The long, extended figure of the central dancer fills the canvas, and its right hand extends over to the other dancer, who is partly in bright white and partly in near-black.
 2. In this frantic, Dionysian outburst, Picasso is the expressive opposite of Magritte: Both paintings are repositories of emotional and sexual content, but Picasso chooses to release rather than box in the emotion. It is Expressionistic, and one small part of it commemorates the death of a friend, whose black silhouette is seen at the top right.
- E. Next, we see *Woman with her Throat Cut* (1932; bronze cast, 1949) by Alberto Giacometti (Swiss, 1901–1966).
1. This eviscerated form may be abstracted but is still too clearly what its title says it is to be looked at with detachment. It is about sexual torture and murder and is, therefore, as relevant today as the day Giacometti conceived it.
 2. Moreover, today, it has a political, totalitarian resonance that the artist may not have had in mind.

- VI. During the 1930s, with a worldwide Depression, Fascism rising, and the possibility of another war looming, art reflected world events.
- A. If Dada, an embracing of the anti-rational and the nihilistic, was one response to the postwar trauma, the art of Piet Mondrian (Dutch, 1872–1944) was another. It is all too easy to assume that the highly structured, non-objective mature paintings of Mondrian are exercises in art for art's sake. Nothing could be further from the truth, because he was not an aesthete—he was an idealist: since the world was without order, Mondrian would supply it.
 - B. From 1920 onward, Mondrian's paintings are quite clear in their intention. Further, Mondrian and his friends, who called their movement *de Stijl* ("the style"), designed furniture, interiors, and architecture that were imbued with the same ideal order, the same intellectual and ethical rigor, that would, in turn, be absorbed by those who used them, inhabited them, or saw them.
 - C. Mondrian never permitted diagonal lines or bars in his compositions, because they were too violent. No violence, indeed no interactive movement, is possible without the diagonal, and conflict and violence were forbidden.
 - D. We see Mondrian's *Composition with Yellow* (1936).
 1. This is a tautly composed, rigorous canvas with a white ground traversed by four black horizontal bands and two black verticals. In the lower right quadrant, Mondrian seems almost to have painted a small painting within the larger, adding two short black horizontals and two verticals and introducing two bright yellow rectangles. Nothing is casual; everything is set down with decisiveness.
 2. I point out the obvious here, because it is not at all obvious. If you could spend a quiet hour with this painting, you would understand the gift of its certitude in an uncertain world. When it was painted, it was a response to the social and political moment of its day, and it seems to answer a similar need today.
- VII. In Spain in the 1930s, the political polarization of the country caused a descent into violence. Joan Miró (Spanish, 1893–1983), one of the founders of Surrealism, was painting in and near Barcelona, the center of Catalan culture. For several years, labor strikes and anarchist uprisings increased, while the government became increasingly reactionary.
- A. As Miró watched the disintegration of order, this painting, *Deux Personages* (*Two Personages*) (1935), was his response.
 1. In the spring of 1935, Miró's painting, previously poetic and witty, fluid and airy, was suddenly invaded by heavy splashes and smudges of paint. Whereas before he had painted small floating faces, insectile forms, and tiny, amusing creatures, he now painted this large, inhuman female figure with red fangs and a red eye.

2. The figure is savage, and it threatens a small, vulnerable figure floating at the left, the other “personage.” Miró’s metamorphosis of the human form into the grotesque elevates it to the epitome of elemental aggression.
3. Miró abandoned beauty of surface and substituted a rubble field of cheesecloth collage, a nest of looped string, sand, and tacks!

B. We next see a work by Salvador Dali (Spanish, 1904–1989), *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)* (1936).

1. A monstrous figure rears above the plain of northern Spain and literally tears itself apart in grotesque frenzy.
2. At the bottom left, the tiny professorial figure of a man peering over the giant hand supplies the scale and with it the enormity of civil war, which Dali anticipated with this painting. Dali said that he aimed at the “materialization of concrete irrationality” in his paintings, and he succeeded here, in his most personal and universal creation.

VIII. The Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939 engaged the sympathies of liberals in Europe, Britain, and America to an extraordinary degree. Some 35,000 foreign nationals fought in the International Brigades on behalf of the Republicans against Franco’s army.

A. We will close with Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937).

B. On April 26, 1937, Guernica, a small market town in northern Spain, was bombed by German warplanes—dive bombers under Franco’s command, allowing the Nazis to test their new toys in Spain. It was the first time a civilian population had been subjected to military air power, and Picasso was outraged over the killing of civilians.

C. Just as Salvador Dali had raised his brand of Surrealism to its highest level under the impetus of the civil war, so, too, did Picasso discover a previously unseen expressive power in the inventions and experiments of Cubism.

1. At the right, a building is in flames, with a woman falling into them.
2. Another woman, dragging her wounded leg, struggles toward the center, toward the light that emanates from a candle thrust into the scene by an astonished head that comes through a window.
3. A horse—its body impaled by a spear—screams, while a fallen warrior lies broken, like a statue, on the ground.
4. At the left, a mother holding her dead child raises her grief-wrenched upturned face to the implacable bull immediately above. In Picasso’s personal but unmistakable symbolic language, the bull is unmovable power and the horse is innocence.
5. In this stark black-and-white image, the victims and the aggressors are locked into a tight composition by a large triangle that leads the

eye to a glaring electric light at the top, in which the light bulb is set in an eye-like oval. Whose eye is this? The eye of God? The eye of conscience? The eye of the world turned on atrocity?

D. My reasons for concluding with *Guernica* are several:

1. This is a survey of European art, and World War II brought European art to a momentary standstill. The physical and economic devastation of Europe and the intervention of America in the war resulted in a shift of power and energy—including artistic energy and emigrating artists—across the Atlantic.
2. *Guernica* itself is a masterwork of European art, and it is a history painting with allegorical elements, similar to Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People*.
3. Taking an even longer view, we may place it beside the Bayeux Tapestry, which we discussed in Lecture Two and a detail of which we now see. Recall the violent climax of the Battle of Hastings in the tapestry, where horses are turned upside down and dead soldiers float in the bottom margin of the embroidered chaos. Some 860 years separate these two works, but much also connects them, both in history and in art history.
4. Much art is beautiful, as beautiful as life often is, and creating beauty is one purpose of art. Another purpose of art is to remind us of historic and personal truths, many of them unpleasant. The achievement of great art is to express both the beautiful and the unpleasant in such a way that we never forget them.

Works Discussed:

Wassily Kandinsky:

Improvisation No. 30 (Cannons), 1913, oil on canvas, 43 ¼ x 43 ¾" (109.2 x 110.5 cm), The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Marcel Duchamp:

Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2, 1912, oil on canvas, 57 x 35" (147.3 x 89 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Fountain, 1917 (replicated 1964), porcelain, 14" H (35.6 cm H), Galleria Schwarz, Milan, Italy.

Umberto Boccioni:

Unique Forms of Continuity in Space, 1913, bronze, 48 ½ x 34" (124.5 x 86 cm), Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Milan, Italy.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner:

Self-Portrait as a Soldier, 1915, oil on canvas, 27 ½ x 24" (69 x 61 cm), Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio, USA.

Rene Magritte:

The Menaced Assassin (L'assassin menacé), 1926, oil on canvas, 4' 11 ¼" x 6' 4 7/8" (150.4 x 195.2 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Pablo Picasso:

The Dance, 1925, oil on canvas, 7' x 4' 8" (215.3 x 142.2 cm), Tate Gallery, London, Great Britain.

Guernica, 1937, oil on canvas, 11' 5 ½" x 25' 5 ½" (349.3 x 776 cm), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain.

Alberto Giacometti:

Woman with her Throat Cut, 1932 (cast 1949), bronze, 8 x 34 ½ x 25" (20.3 x 87.6 x 63.5 cm), The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York, USA.

Piet Mondrian:

Composition with Yellow, 1936, oil on canvas, 29 ¼ x 26" (74 x 66 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Joan Miró:

Deux Personnages, 1935, oil and collage on cardboard, 41 1/16" x 28 1/8" (102 x 74 cm), The Kreeger Museum, Washington, D.C., USA.

Salvador Dali:

Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War), 1936, oil on canvas, 39 5/16 x 39 3/8" (101.5 x 102 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Further Reading:

Peter Howard Selz, *Art in Our Times: A Pictorial History, 1890–1980*.

Edward Lucie-Smith, *Visual Arts in the 20th Century*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Of the *isms* discussed in this lecture, which one appeals most to you and why?
2. Thinking back to Lecture One and our discussion of subject, interpretation, style, context, and emotion, choose one of the artworks from this lecture and consider it in relation to those elements.

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